

SELECTED ESSAYS  
ON  
G.W.F.  
HEGEL

EDITED BY  
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# PREFACE

Since its introduction to North American scholars in the nineteenth century, Hegel's philosophy has always found American advocates. Of course, like any philosophy, it has also found its critics, but no one can deny that Hegelianism has exercised a profound influence on American philosophy. In the past, it served to stimulate and nourish such archetypical American philosophers as John Dewey and Josiah Royce. As evidenced by this collection of essays, it has endured as a powerful intellectual force.

The history of American Hegelianism can be traced back at least as far as Frederick Augustus Rauch, who immigrated to the United States in 1831, the year of Hegel's death. As an enthusiastic student of Hegel, Rauch first taught philosophy at Mercersburg Seminary and later became president of Marshall College in Pennsylvania. By the late 1840s, particularly in Ohio, informal associations were formed to discuss issues in speculative philosophy in general and Hegelianism in particular. But it was not until the post-Civil War period that the first formal group was established, the St. Louis Philosophical Society. It comprised about fifty members and was the first philosophical society in North America. A number of its principal figures, such as Henry C. Brokemeyer, William Torrey Harris, and Denton J. Snider, were educational and civic leaders in Reconstruction America. Brokemeyer, who helped found the St. Louis society, was to become the lieutenant governor and then acting governor of Missouri. Harris, also a cofounder, became a lifetime director of the National Education Association and, from 1889 to 1906, was the United States Commissioner of Education. Harris's devotion to and understanding of Hegel are evidenced by a translation of and a full commentary on Hegel's *Science of Logic*. He was also in regular correspondence with academic philosophers such as Charles Sanders Peirce. Denton J. Snider is perhaps best known for having developed the kindergarten system into a national program, but he also cofounded, with Harris, *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy*. This journal, the first philosophical journal to be issued in the United States, served as an

important vehicle for Hegelian studies, and through it a number of major American scholars developed a sympathetic understanding of Hegel's philosophy. Among the most influential of these early academic Hegelians were G. S. Morris at the University of Michigan; George Herbert Palmer, the chairman of Harvard's philosophy department; and George Holmes Howison of the University of California. In sum, there is a long and influential tradition of Hegelian scholarship in North America. In this same tradition, and almost marking the centennial of the founding of the St. Louis Philosophical Society, the Hegel Society of America was established in 1969. Today it claims over 500 members throughout the world and, just as its predecessor, has its own journal, *The Owl of Minerva*.

Since its establishment, the Hegel Society of America has met biennially. Humanities Press has published the collected papers from four conferences: the 1974 conference at Georgetown University, whose dual theme was Art and Logic in Hegel's philosophy; the 1976 conference at Villanova University, which dealt with Hegel's social and political philosophy; the 1978 conference at Pennsylvania State University, which had Hegel's phenomenology as its theme; and the 1981 joint meeting of the Hegel Society of America and the Hegel Society of Great Britain at Oxford University, whose topic was Hegel's philosophy of action.

Time and demand have made the excellent papers presented at these various conferences increasingly difficult to obtain. This volume collects a selection of papers drawn from the four earlier publications. These papers represent the best of the best, and it can only be regretted that circumstances prevented the republication of all the papers. The papers are arranged according to their order of publication.

The editor is deeply indebted to Professor Philip L. Grier of Dickinson College for his assistance in making a difficult task much less so.

# ART AND LOGIC

# THE PUZZLE OF HEGEL'S AESTHETICS

Sir T. M. Knox

Plato was clearly a lover of beauty and he was a master of style. Yet at the end of his *Republic*, he banishes Homer from his state along with all "representative" art, although in some passages the qualification "representative" is omitted. Art, in short, may be pleasant, but it is deceptive; it appeals to emotion and not the intellect, and poetry and philosophy are irreconcilable.

Now Hegel surely had Plato's discussion of art in mind when he was lecturing on aesthetics, and it seems that his attitude toward art became even more negative than Plato's. He says quite specifically that art for us is a thing of the past (11),<sup>1</sup> that it reached its zenith in Greece, that contemporary life is inimical to art, and that art's vocation to reveal truth had been discharged by religion and philosophy. This seems plain enough, but at the end of his lectures Hegel says that in comedy art finds its dissolution altogether (1236). He also ends his general introduction (90) by remarking that the wide pantheon of art is rising, but to complete it will take thousands of years. "We may well hope that art will always rise higher and come to perfection" (103).

If we take pronouncements like these literally and out of context, their glaring inconsistency can hardly be explained away by remembering that we are dealing with the text of lectures delivered in different years and that Hegel changed his views from time to time. Nevertheless, there may be some significance in the fact that in 1817, when the first edition of the *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences* was published, the inconsistency to which I have referred is no more than implicit. There, as in the earlier *Phenomenology*, there is no section devoted explicitly to art; instead there is one on the "Religion of Art," in which there is one reference to "beauty," and this "Religion" is then superseded by "Revealed Religion."

Having read the lectures on aesthetics seven times in the course of translating them, I have come to the conclusion that there is only one way

of solving the puzzle presented by this inconsistency and finding in Hegel a view of art that, although unacceptable in part, is at least exempt from the charge that he regards art as dead and useless. My proposed solution depends on taking into account all that Hegel says and attempting to discern what he really means. Some things that at first appear to be inconsistent or contradictory may not be so in the last resort.

For Hegel, art has a vocation of its own, not one given to it or forced upon it from the outside (152). In other words, its vocation is not utility (55). It is not meant to be something useful, whether in the interests of morality, or as an amusement, or as a decoration. It shares with religion and philosophy the vocation of revealing the truth (7), and though it reveals it in a sensuous form, it is essentially an intellectual activity, whether on the part of the productive artist or of the spectator, listener, or reader. Nature as a temporal and spatial series of finite events and things cannot provide any adequate revelation of the spirit or the truth, and the *necessity* for the beauty of art arises from this deficiency of nature (152). Artistic beauty is called upon to display in an external fashion both life and spiritual animation and thus to lift the truth out of a purely natural environment.

It follows from this, however, that for us (i.e., for Hegel) art, as a vehicle of truth, is no longer simply to be enjoyed for its own sake (11). It can be, indeed has to be, *judged*, in the sense that we can distinguish between the meaning of a work of art and its shape, or between its content and its form; and we consider the adequacy or appropriateness of each of these to the other. At one time, Hegel believed the meaning was so perfectly embodied in the shape that truth had reached a stage at which it could be adequate to itself in the sensuously perceived object. This happened, in his view, in Greece. There, at the point that truth had reached, or at the extent to which the spirit had reached consciousness of itself, art fulfilled its "highest vocation" because meaning and shape coincided (301). The spirit had risen to a certain level of self-consciousness, and this was the stage that truth had reached. And that level and that stage were embodied without remainder in the shape of the work of art. This is apparently why Hegel said that art had reached its zenith in Greece.

Symbolic art was superseded by the glory of classical art, where meaning and shape coincided; in the plastic figures of Greek statuary, and even of great men and dramatic characters, objective and subjective coalesced. It was as if art and religion were one. Greek religion, however, influenced from Egypt and the East, however molded by Homer and Hesiod, needed temples and statuary as the very embodiment of the divine. The gods were worshipped *in* the statues, and the Greeks bowed to the statues for that reason.

This coalescence, however, was only temporary, because in Greece the

subjective had not developed into its full rights. The world spirit had traveled far indeed, but it moves on: Its self-revelation is as gradual as its self-knowledge. By the end of the fifth century B.C., religion was losing its sway in Greece. Socrates did pay tribute to a dying orthodoxy by sacrificing a cock to Aesculapius, but Aristophanes was shortly to ridicule the gods of Olympus, and Plato sounded their death knell.

As Hegel put it, "the hinge of the world was turning."<sup>2</sup> Aristotle had foreshadowed something higher than the religion of Greece, and some of the Jewish prophets had already preceded him. The advent of Christianity and its superseding of Greek religion brought an end to what Hegel had earlier called the "religion of art," and along with it the perfection of Greek art. Now Hegel might have said that a new art was the harbinger of a religious change, but he did not and perhaps could not. What he called "romantic art," which has nothing to do with what we call the romantic art of the nineteenth century but was essentially medieval art, had its content or subject matter given to it from outside, whereas in Greek art the content or meaning was, as it were, formed by art itself *pari passu*, with the shape produced. Greek religion did not precede Greek art, or so Hegel believed, but the Christian religion did precede and provide content or subject matter for art to illustrate, and this is what "romantic" art did.

The most important thing about this, Hegel thought, so far as art was concerned, was that the subjective consciousness, including conscience, was at last given its due by Christianity. It was because of the lack of explicit subjectivity in the Greek outlook, and therefore in Greek art, that Hegel could say that art "reached its peak" in Italian painting from the thirteenth to sixteenth centuries (although we had already been told that the zenith was in Greece).

Once again, however, the hinge of the world was turning. With the coming of the Reformation, romantic art, which had been centered in Roman Catholicism, began slowly to crumble. To images and pictures of the Madonna and the saints, the Protestant knee could bow no longer. The religion presented to feeling and imagination in these pictures and images had been so revised or reformed that it was now available to the intellect in the symbolical books and in philosophy. It was because the "highest vocation" of art could not now be fulfilled by art itself that art had become, in Hegel's words, *etwas vergangenes*, a thing of the past. Religious truth, as expounded in Protestantism, and the self-consciousness of the Spirit, as finally achieved in philosophy, had resulted in art being "no longer a fulfillment of our highest spiritual needs." And these words have led some to say that for Hegel art is "useless." But it might still fulfill a spiritual need even if not the highest one. Who but a Philistine would deny this? Did Hegel?

No. But if I am to defend this answer, I must state at greater length the case against it, and in the course of doing so I will try to deal with what is a minor but not unrelated puzzle: If art is perfect in Greece, why does Hegel so often mention Shakespeare and give him such high praise?

Hegel's laudatory account of Greek art is expressed firmly and repeatedly (301, 427). In Greece "art has reached its own essential nature." The Greeks "produced art in its supreme vitality" (436). "The perfection of art reached its peak (in Greece) precisely because the spiritual was completely drawn through its external appearance. . . . Nothing can be or become more beautiful" (517). The statement is emphatic, but Hegel does say *more* beautiful, not *as* beautiful; he goes on to say that there is something "higher" than this beauty of Greek art.

What Hegel has in mind here is simply that Christianity is a higher and truer religion than Greek religion (435ff.). Greek religion is the "religion of art," but the content of this religion and of Greek art is defective because it does not pass beyond the classical ideal (508). It lacks the moment of the negative: It remains sensuous; sense has not died and then become resurrected as spirit. Consequently, romantic art is the most concrete form of art and a "higher form" of art than the Greek (79).

Nevertheless classical art is "the true manifestation of art" (317) because it achieves the complete coincidence of content and form, which symbolic art only seeks. In Greece, art has developed to maturity, and at that stage art must of necessity produce its representations in the form of man's external appearance (434). Hence the supremacy of Greek sculpture.

In passages like these we can see that the perfection that Hegel ascribes to Greek art is derived from his contrasting Greek art, its measure and restraint, with the formless, boundless, colossal productions of Indian and Egyptian art. The Greeks achieved beauty, and it is beauty that was missing in earlier art. Romantic art finds room for the ugly as well, and this makes it more concrete than Greek art. It is a higher form because it is more subjective and brings painting and music to perfection.

At this point doubts about Hegel's whole theory of art and his attitude toward it begin to arise. If art is truly manifested in Greece, then music and painting are inferior arts and Shakespeare is outclassed by the Greek dramatists. If there is something defective in Greek art, we are told, the defect is just art itself and the restrictedness of the sphere of art (79). The "proper essence of art" is the identity of meaning and shape (576). But if the meaning is known independently of art, in religion and finally in philosophy, art is no longer required (535). Hegel tries to meet this criticism in a short paragraph.

The religious material, he says, which is the content of romantic art, needs art because in Christianity the divine coalesces with an individual



actually perceived and therefore entwined with the finitude of nature. The events in the life of Jesus Christ have passed away; his sufferings, death, resurrection, and ascension belong to history, but all these events are repeated and perpetually renewed in art alone.

This must be one of the weakest arguments Hegel ever used, if only because it seems to be contradicting his view of art as something not useful but valuable in itself. Art cannot repeat or renew historical events; it cannot bring the past to life. It can provide only statues or pictures of persons or events, or poems about them, or set words about them to music. But in that case art has a purpose: It is useful in reminding us of the past, or picturing some of it for our imagination. But no one has argued more powerfully than Hegel against the view that the essence of art is utility. By trying to save the necessity of art by arguing in this way, Hegel is entering a blind alley. He is led into it by his own fundamental error about art itself.

His distinction between meaning and shape, content and form, may be allowed; but his belief that the meaning or content can be discerned and expounded is a fatal flaw in his philosophy of art. Art means what it says. But what it says is the work of art itself, and this cannot be translated. Hegel's distance from a true understanding of art comes out once when he says that a poem can be translated into another language without loss, or even into prose. He does say repeatedly that genuine poetry does not arise from the poet's apprehension of some philosophical idea and then decorating it with fine language; but if this is so, there is no reason to suppose that the poem can be translated into prose. He thinks that some of Schiller's poems are too philosophical, and he never suggests that the merit of Homer is to remind the Greeks of the Trojan War and its aftermath or to renew it in their experience.

But it is in his treatment of music that his theory becomes most glaringly inadequate.

Hegel certainly loved pictures, and he studied them with care wherever he went. His remarks about them are regarded as very "sensitive" by one who can speak with authority on this subject (Sir Ernest Gombrich).<sup>3</sup> Yet Hegel might well have agreed with a remark much used by advertisers in England when I was young, namely "every picture tells a story," and he would certainly have repudiated with scorn the "abstract" art of our own day. But if it was clear to Hegel what a picture was a picture of, he was in difficulty when it came to music. So long as there were words, he could understand it; the music meant what the words said or could even impart a new and more profound meaning to the words themselves. Consequently he was at home with opera, which he adored. The libretto did not need to be very good: I suspect that, for him, the worse it was the better, for he thought Schiller's poems quite unsuitable for musical setting. Presumably they were too good; music could add nothing to them or do anything to

interpret them. Those who love Schubert's songs may well gasp at this judgment.

It is when Hegel writes about instrumental music that his misunderstanding becomes almost comical. The amateur, he thinks, can appreciate music and realize what it is about if it is an accompaniment to words. But if there are no words, what is it about? Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* or Handel's *Messiah* are intelligible because we know the words, but what are we to make of a string quartet or a symphony? These, Hegel suggests, are for the expert and the professional only, because, unlike the amateur, the expert can follow the modulations and what might be called the mathematical background of the thing. Hegel does say that Mozart was a master of instrumentation, and the context might suggest that he has the symphonies in mind, but I doubt it. I think he is still doting on *The Magic Flute* or *Don Giovanni*. It follows that instrumental music may be ingenious, but it is apparently meaningless; at any rate Hegel cannot find a meaning and therefore pays it only lip service. It does not occur to him that it means what it says, but can express the meaning only in its sounds, notes, and melodies. He says that the amateur does hunt for a meaning and tries to associate his mood as a listener with the landscape or emotion that may have aroused the mood in which the composer composed. And it is true enough that many people have attempted to make the music say something definite about moonlight and so on, to make music imitative, but here again we encounter Hegel's violent and justified repudiation of the view that art is imitation or that the imitation of nature is its business.

The puzzle of Hegel's theory of art is thus twofold: First, despite the repeated eulogy of Shakespeare, art is said to attain its zenith in Greece. Homer and Sophocles seem to have reached the height of art, and yet Raphael, Dutch painting, Mozart's operas, Goethe's and Schiller's poetry seem to be in the first class too, let alone Shakespeare.

Second, with comedy art is said to "annul itself" (529). Thus in the work of artists since the seventeenth century (excluding some operas and the work of Goethe and Schiller), art has come to an end. What it proclaimed in the sensuous beauty of religious and national life is a thing of the past; what painters and the builders of Gothic cathedrals expressed in their own media was the Roman Catholic religion, and the adornment given by some even to the Protestant faith (did Hegel include Shakespeare among these?) has become unnecessary. What art portrayed in a sensuous form is now our intellectual possession, either in the creeds or in the teachings of modern philosophy. And yet, to repeat, the completion of the wide pantheon of art will take thousands of years (90).

Here is the fundamental puzzle. The other is whether Hegel really put Greek drama above Shakespeare.

Having propounded puzzles, I must advance tentative answers. I take the

lesser puzzle first. Hegel regarded *Antigone* by Sophocles as the finest dramatic portrayal of a conflict between the duty of private or family life and the political order. He did not find this *kind* of conflict in Shakespeare. Since it is of no use to compare things that are not *in pari materia*, Greek tragedy and Shakespearean cannot be compared; each is excellent in its own kind. It is futile, to take an example from a sphere where I am more at home, to compare the excellence of Bach's Toccata and Fugue in D Minor with the first Piano Concerto of Brahms.

Nevertheless I think that Hegel did regard the Homeric epics as unsurpassed by later epics, Greek sculpture as not surpassed by any of its successors; in short, he may have preferred masterpieces of what he called the classical form of art to those works of the romantic form of art, which could be regarded as similar in basic belief and character. He compared many romantic poems with those of the eighteenth century, to the disadvantage of the latter. He compared like with like. But he could not compare classical art with romantic art because the latter was higher and more concrete. Sophocles and Shakespeare cannot be put in the same class. So much for the lesser of my puzzles. I now turn to the other, which I described as fundamental.

Hegel saw that a great deal of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century art was poor, as romantic art, in comparison with its predecessors. And despite Goethe and Schiller, Mozart, Gluck, and Rossini, he had no taste for contemporary or recent art and so thought that art was a thing of the past. Well I too, a lover of nineteenth-century music (I am not versed in painting, though modern painting seems to me to be similar in execution, and inspiration, to modern music), regard the successors of the great nineteenth-century masters in a way that might make me say that music is dead. No one is going to convince me that Bartok, Schoenberg, or Stockhausen are anything but far beneath Schumann, Brahms, or Liszt. As Hegel might have said, "Music is a thing of the past." Nevertheless, although I do regard the music of the last fifty years or so as decadent, doomed eventually (and, I hope, shortly) to oblivion, I would not say of it that music was dead, no matter how ephemeral some composers may be.

It is easy to take some of Hegel's (or his editor's) words out of their context and say that he thought that art had come to an end in his day, and we need not be surprised to find Croce saying that the "Aesthetic of Hegel is thus a funeral oration: he passes in review the successive forms of art . . . and lays the whole in its grave. . . . Art [for metaphysical idealism is] absolutely useless."<sup>4</sup> But if this verdict of Croce's were true, it would be very hard to explain what Hegel meant when he said that art would continue its task for thousands of years and that we would hope that it might come to perfection. I am bold enough to say that here Croce, for

whose work I have a profound respect, was mistaken. He has not considered all of Hegel's statements and therefore has not set himself to solve the puzzle that they present.

This I have ventured to do myself, and whether my answer is correct or not, its importance, if any, is that it is at the same time an answer to those who have maintained that Hegel regarded his philosophy as final, so that philosophy had finished its task and come to an end with his *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*.

Hegel insists, as we have seen, that art is an intellectual activity, charged like religion and philosophy with the task of revealing the truth, although it veils the truth in a sensuous form unlike philosophy, which declares its message in plain prose, in intellectual terms, for thinking, not for feeling. But this must be a continuing task.

Thus when Hegel says that art transcends itself, or annuls itself, and so on, it is the dissolution of *romantic* art that he has in view, and this is said once quite specifically (608). It is true that earlier (529) he says that we now require higher forms for the apprehension of truth than art is in a position to supply, but his point, I think, is that the thematic material of romantic art, though richer than that of Greek art, has been apprehended explicitly in religion and philosophy, and that in comedy and humor it is romantic art that has come to an end. But art does still fulfill a spiritual need.

I place my reliance not only on a general reading of Hegel, but on a passage of the *Aesthetics* in the section on "poetic diction" (1007). Here Hegel says that poetry must put us on different ground from that of ordinary and everyday life, from our religious ideas and actions, from our scientific and philosophical thinking. Now, despite what Sir Karl Popper thinks, Hegel was no fool. He knew that "ordinary everyday life" had changed and was changing. The world spirit did not stand still. Hegel saw the beginnings of street lighting in some places, and he had traveled enough to find that what was ordinary in one place had already been superseded in another. His own writings on religion showed how the art adapted to Roman Catholicism had altered after the Reformation, and he was so dissatisfied with his contemporary Lutheranism that he foresaw the coming of Modernism and therefore, on his own principles, of a new art to adumbrate or illustrate it. His dissatisfaction with the science of his day is clear enough to any reader of the second section of his *Encyclopedia* and some parts of the *Science of Logic*. His philosophy of history ends with the emphatic words *bis hieher* has consciousness come. Consequently whatever his philosophy had done to *begreifen* the course of the world, and whatever the Spirit had revealed of itself up to that time, the Spirit still lived, and its further revelation would come first in art, then in religion and science. Philosophy's task to *begreifen* this new world would be unceasing.

Hegel's own life was not particularly happy; he did not enjoy fame until near the end of his life, and even then he had official vexations enough. His survey of contemporary life did not encourage hope. The owl of Minerva spread its wings only with the falling of the dusk. An age of the world had grown old, and the prospect of what the new age would be like filled him with gloom. And today as we survey what looks all too like the collapse of European civilization, in Great Britain we may be gloomy too.

A great deal of art had come to a dead end shortly before Hegel's time. It was to burgeon forth anew later in his own century: Modernism was to appear in the Christian religion; in science Darwin lay ahead, to say nothing of his epigoni; the course of history did not stop, nor did attempts to understand it; and philosophy, following Hegel, as he followed Plato or Aristotle or Spinoza, flourished as well. But in the last fifty years or so, thanks to some extent to wars, art has turned its back on beauty, theology has relapsed into the cul-de-sac of a dead orthodoxy, and philosophy has deserted its vocation and sunk from considering the great problems of human life and destiny into exploring the meanings of words and playing language games.

Placed as he was in the culture of his time, Hegel may well have had his moments of despair. It is easy to have the same today. But art and religion and philosophy, whatever may be said of too many of their contemporary practitioners, are not dead. *Nil desperandum*, or, as Galileo is reported to have said, *eppur si muove*.

## NOTES

1. Parenthesized numbers throughout this essay are citations to pages in Knox's translation of Hegel's *Lectures on Aesthetics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975). [ed.]
2. In his preface to the *Philosophy of Right*.
3. In a letter to the author.
4. Benedetto Croce, *Aesthetic*, trans. D. Ainslie (New York: Noonday Press, 1953), pp. 302-3.

# A REEXAMINATION OF THE 'DEATH OF ART' INTERPRETATION OF HEGEL'S AESTHETICS

Curtis L. Carter

There was a time in our very recent past when we were told that all-encompassing theories of art were unfruitful. But losing one's perspective in the rich field of particularity in art, or in a narrow analytical focus on art concepts, will no more produce significant understanding than will arid theories apart from experiencing the qualities of individual artworks. It is possible to retain the insights of both approaches, into particular works with their distinctive qualities and into the analysis of art concepts, by not treating the two activities as ends in themselves. In the philosophy of art there is a need to take up once again the grand scheme that relates art to other aspects of human experience and connects insights derived from particular works to a study of art concepts.

What better way to do this than to reexamine the grandest of the grand schemes for a philosophy of art? There is good reason to regard Hegel's philosophy of art as a means to overcome deficiencies found in the two approaches considered above. It relates art to other aspects of human experience, nature, culture, and the world order. At the same time Hegel's philosophy of art emerges from his own extensive acquaintance with the arts. The possibility that his approach to art fulfills the need to relate the particular perceptions and analysis of concepts to each other in the wider scope of human experience is quite strong. There is no doubt that Hegel provides one of the richest accounts of art given by any philosopher. Yet there exists a formidable obstacle to the appreciation of his aesthetics. The dominant trend has been to interpret Hegel's *Lectures on Aesthetics* and his other materials on art as signifying the "death of art," or the view that art as a significant human activity reached its end with the dissolution of romantic art. Erich Heller's statement is representative:

Both Hegel's Classical and Romantic art emerge from his metaphysics as sentenced to death by the very law of the Spirit. Classical art had to die because the Spirit could not abide by the perfect understanding it had reached with concrete reality; for it lies in the Spirit's true nature that in the end it should be rid of all sensuous encumbrance. . . . Romantic art is the negation of the very idea of art . . . as the body of the Idea.<sup>1</sup>

The view is shared by Croce, Israel Knox, and others who have considered the question less carefully:

The German refused to evade the logical exigencies of his system and proclaimed the mortality, nay the very death, of art. . . . He passes in review the successive forms of art, shows the progressive steps of internal consumption and lays the whole in its grave, leaving philosophy to write its epitaph.<sup>2</sup>

By a process of sheer dialectical deduction Hegel infers the death of art; it is necessitated by the conceptual determinism of his metaphysical dialectical absolutism.<sup>3</sup>

Even those who have indicated their lack of support for the prevailing interpretation—Bosanquet, D'Hondt, Findlay, and Harries—have not offered an adequate examination of the inadequacy of the view that Hegel intends to signal the death of art. Bosanquet argues that Croce misunderstands Hegel's logic and mistranslates the term *Auflösung* as death of art; he thereby agrees with my position that Croce errs in attributing the death of art thesis to Hegel.<sup>4</sup> And these words of professor D'Hondt affirm a similar conclusion: "Hegel a-t-il annoncé la mort de l'art? Impossible de lui imputer un tel crime. . . . Il n'emploie jamais ces mots, *la mort de l'art*, et il lui arrive d'exprimer des opinions qui contredisent cette pensée funèbre."<sup>5</sup> Professor Harries also agrees that Hegel should not be interpreted as proclaiming the death of art; but Harries does accept a weaker version of the death of art thesis when he claims that for Hegel art has lost its highest vocation and asserts that art is in a position to offer the modern world no more than a diversion.<sup>6</sup> Finally, it is surely significant that so notable an interpreter of Hegel as Professor Findlay makes no mention of the death of art in his own account of Hegel's view of art.<sup>7</sup>

This paper further develops the notion that the death of art interpretation is unwarranted by critically examining the arguments of Heller, Croce, and Knox, with reference to the *Lectures on Aesthetics* and Hegel's other writings on art. The analysis of crucial texts results in support for the alternative thesis that Hegel did not intend the death of art and that he explicitly and implicitly provides for the continuation and development of art. He explicitly provides for the continuation of art through its participation in the

more inclusive accounts of Absolute Spirit offered by religion and philosophy, which are the other two modes of Absolute Spirit. Additionally, Hegel's aesthetics implicitly liberate art from its past forms and from a narrow construing of content. Art is thus free to develop new forms in the light of future creative activity of individual artists acting in relation to the cultures of their times.

The very richness and complexity of Hegel's discussion of art, not to mention the relation of the material on art to the larger themes of Hegel's system, make hazardous any attempt to give a final reading of Hegel's view on the place and future of art. The same richness suggests a many-sided gem that cannot be examined sufficiently from a single perspective. My primary objective here is not to refute conclusively the death of art interpretation but to set forth the problem in a form that will generate further discussion and rethinking that will lead to clarification of an important aspect of Hegel's philosophy of art. The paper develops the following points: (1) The claim that Hegel's metaphysical dialectical principle necessarily produces the death of art is shown to be based on a misapplication of the principle of the dialectic. (2) A review of the texts most likely to support the death of art thesis establishes sufficient qualifications in every case to support an alternative interpretation. (3) The death of art thesis misunderstands the dissolution in romantic art of subjective and sensuous elements and confuses changes in romantic art with the demise of all art.

## MISAPPLICATIONS OF THE PRINCIPLES OF DIALECTIC

Characteristic of the death of art interpretation are applications of the principle of dialectic or development that are in one way or another hostile to the welfare of art. Dialectic can be applied to Hegel's view of art at two levels. It is applied to the relation between art, religion, and philosophy, which are the three modes of disclosing Absolute Spirit to man's consciousness. Art is understood to be Spirit's "sensuous manifestation." Religion and philosophy are more "ideal" and more inclusive representations that come closer to the true qualities of Spirit (HA, 101-5).<sup>8</sup> Dialectic also operates in reference to the states of the idea of art: symbolic, classical, and romantic.

Croce, Heller, and Knox base their argument for the death of art interpretation on a mechanical view of the role of dialectic. According to their interpretation, the death of art is a necessary logical consequence of the dialectical unfolding of Absolute Spirit. As the dialectic unfolds at this level we find that beauty in art is a synthesis of the sensuous and the rational, romantic art is a synthesis of symbolic and classical art, and philosophy is a



synthesis of art and religion.<sup>9</sup> Art's demise is projected on two levels. The appearance of philosophy as the most complete and definitive presentation of Absolute Spirit is understood to dispense with the need for art. Analogously, on another level the dialectic manifests itself in the symbolic, classical, and romantic forms of art. These successive forms are said to "pass in review" until art reaches its outer limits as a viable expression of Absolute Spirit, thus drawing to a close the life of art.<sup>10</sup>

### *The Dialectic Applied to Art, Religion, and Philosophy*

The first line of criticism of the death of art thesis can be made with respect to dialectical development in the progression from art to philosophy. It is necessary to give a brief explanation of Hegel's view on this point to see where the death of art thesis has gone wrong. The thesis is problematic because it presumes that an advancement in the stages of dialectic evolution from art to philosophy results in the annihilation or uselessness of the previous stages. This view is in conflict with Hegel's explanation of the dialectic. Hegel describes the stages of the dialectic in his preface to *The Phenomenology of Mind* as equally necessary moments of an organic unity that constitute the life of the whole. Hyppolite and other distinguished commentators on Hegel's system have proposed that the stages in Hegel's dialectic move to ever richer developments and "always reproduce within themselves the prior developments and give them new meaning."<sup>11</sup> I adopt this interpretation of Hegel's dialectic because it represents Hegel's general philosophical method and because it is in fact the method that he uses to discuss both the relations between art, religion, and philosophy and the various stages in the development of art.

Hegel does distinguish the points of view of the artist and the philosopher, and he clearly differentiates art from philosophy. The artist's task is to grasp reality and its forms through alert eyes and ears. Although reason acts to enable the artist to relate his perceptions to the idea of Absolute Spirit, the artist does not comprehend experience in propositions and representations (*Sätze und Vorstellungen*) as does the philosopher. Rather, the artist brings to consciousness the inner core of reason clothed in concrete forms and the individualities of real life. His representations are so infused with the stamp of emotional life that they make public a part of the artist's own spiritual personality (HA, 281–82).<sup>12</sup> Art is thereby capable of presenting only those aspects of the Absolute that can be expressed in sensuous form. In contrast, the point of view of philosophy is that of the whole, the absolute, God. Philosophy or thought is the mode of apprehension in which both subject and form are identical. Philosophy is thus the self-reflection of Absolute Spirit (HA, 101, 105).<sup>13</sup> The model that is suggested is

incarnation—in philosophy we have the disclosing of God as he knows himself—and the point of view of philosophy thereby becomes the most inclusive account of being.<sup>14</sup>

There is no doubt then that Hegel assigns philosophy, understood in the above sense, a higher place than art as a manifestation of Absolute Spirit (HA, 10–11). In the *Phenomenology* art is placed very high but not at the highest stage of the dialectical development. Hegel assigns philosophy a higher place than art in his *Aesthetics* too. Art ranks highest in neither form nor content, and Hegel's choice of philosophy as the more inclusive mode of Spirit suggests his preference.<sup>15</sup> But none of these facts warrants the conclusion of Knox and the others that Hegel pronounces the death of art. Hegel's concept of philosophy incorporates art into its more comprehensive grasp of things. Both art and religion are united (*vereinigt*) in philosophy, where their characteristics are related to the form and subjectivity of thought. Art is neither lost nor abandoned in the more comprehensive synthesis of philosophy, but continues to function as a vital part of the larger unity. The expression of the Absolute in relation to dialectic and philosophy would be incomplete without the continued participation of art as one of the elements of the whole.<sup>16</sup> There is no need to think of destruction of previous modes, art and religion, because it is characteristic of dialectic that the higher mode integrates the content of lower ones as aspects of a wider scope where the previous categories can exist without contradiction.<sup>17</sup> At the same time, the significance of the previous categories is retained.

### *The Dialectic in Symbolic, Classical, Romantic Forms of Art*

The manifestation of dialectic in symbolic, classical, and romantic art forms is another part of the argument for the death of art thesis. Knox states that romantic art is a consuming synthesis of the other two forms, and Heller describes the romantic form as the disintegration of art itself. Its demise is thus offered as evidence for the death of art thesis. A brief examination of Hegel's discussion of these forms is necessary to show that support for the death of art thesis is lacking here too.

Each of the forms is effective in some degree as a representation of Absolute Spirit. Symbolic art, the first, is closest to nature. The sensuous elements in art and Absolute Spirit are brought into proximity at this level, but they are unable to achieve a unification of the sensuous form and spiritual content of art (HA, 655).<sup>18</sup> The earliest forms of symbolic art, being close to nature, exhibit the principle of the productive energy of generation (HA, 641).<sup>19</sup> Phallus and lingam are examples of organic shapes

used in symbolic art. They appear as pillars and columns constructed in the shapes of male and female sex organs. These can be seen in the early prearchitectural and architectural forms in the arts of Syria, India, and Egypt. The height of symbolic art comes in architectural structures such as the pyramids, which in part abandon the shapes of nature for shapes that derive from the artistic powers of man's mind. The pyramids, unlike structures that merely satisfy the physical want of shelter, act as religious and political symbols (HA, 653, 655).<sup>20</sup> Despite its degree of success, symbolic art lacks both the form and the adequate grasp of Spirit as its content that is found in later developments in art.

Classical art advances the development. Its sculpture takes its preferred model from the human body. Unlike the other natural animal bodies whose bodily frames are animated by animal soul (*Seele*), the human form also has a quality of spirit (*Geist*) (HA, 714–15).<sup>21</sup> Spirit is explained here as “being for itself of conscious and self-conscious existence,” together with the emotions, ideas, and purposes of that existence. The universal qualities of the human form are ideally receptive to a unity of form and content by which Spirit enters into the sensuous form of the sculpture, analogous to the receptivity of the human body to Spirit. However, the unity of classical art bypasses the genuinely subjective aspects of personal self-consciousness and is found to be unstable (HA, 716–18).<sup>22</sup> The result is the dissolution of the objective unity of the classical form of art.

The emergence of romantic art introduces the last of Hegel's determinate forms of art. A careful understanding of Hegel's view of the romantic form of art is very important to the clarification of the death of art issue. Advocates of the death of art thesis emphasize two themes arising from romantic art. They assert that romantic art consumes the previous forms of art through the workings of dialectic and then point to the alleged disengagement of inner subjective aspects from outer sensuous form as the definitive evidence for the death of art. But I will show that the synthesis of the previous forms of art into romantic art and the changed relation of the subjective and sensuous elements that Hegel finds in romantic art do not entail the death of art. Croce and the others who interpret Hegel's aesthetics according to the death of art hypothesis fail to see that synthesis in romantic art includes the previously independent forms without destroying them. The changed relation of sensuous and subjective elements in romantic art is not synonymous with art's demise.

#### SYNTHESIS IN ROMANTIC ART

The romantic arts of painting, music, and poetry each provide some synthesis of the previous forms of art. Painting takes representations of environments from architecture and uses them as background settings for

the human figure, which it borrows from sculpture (HA, 797f.). Poetry then combines "essential qualities" of painting and music to embrace the most inclusive perspective of the arts. Hegel's remarks on dramatic poetry offer another example of the dialectic synthesis in a particular romantic art. There, the synthesis shows the lesser arts—architecture, sculpture, painting, and music—appearing as vital parts in a theater presentation of dramatic poetry (HA, 1181f., 1190).<sup>23</sup> Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and Mozart's *Magic Flute*, each in its own way, illustrate the synthesis by their use of the lesser arts in the total "poetry" of a dramatic performance.

According to the death of art thesis, we should expect the workings of dialectic to produce the destruction of the lesser and prior stages of art. But quite a different effect is seen. These representative samples of dialectic synthesis taken from Hegel's discussion of romantic arts show that the lesser arts, or principles derived from them, are retained and used in the context of a larger purpose. On the other hand, neither example suggests any use of these arts that would result in their cancellation apart from the synthesis. Nothing in the painter's use of principles borrowed from architecture and sculpture makes painting an adequate replacement of these two arts. And likewise the use of music in a drama does no violence to its status as music. The examination of dialectic in romantic art thus fails to support the death of art thesis; instead, it reinforces the previous point that dialectic incorporates rather than destroys earlier stages of its development.

#### THE CHANGED RELATION OF SENSUOUS FORM AND THE SUBJECTIVE IN ROMANTIC ART

The development of romantic art signifies a shift of emphasis from the sensuous or visible form and its relation to Absolute Spirit to self-conscious subjectivity—the inner world of the ideal and of emotions, soul, and contemplation of the subject (HA, 792–96). Personal subjectivity and its involvement with Absolute Spirit are the main centers of interest for this changed point of view. This shift has been understood by the advocates of the death of art thesis as an irrevocable split between two essential elements of art, resulting in art's permanent dissolution. However, an examination of Hegel's discussion of this point suggests that too great an emphasis has been placed on the alleged disengagement of sense and subjectivity. Hegel is partly to blame, for his language at times does appear to suggest such a reading. Yet careful attention to the full context of the discussion shows Hegel repeatedly reminding the reader of the continuing necessity for a vital relation between the sensuous and the subjective in art (HA, 795).

Admittedly, there is less attention given by Hegel to the positive role of the sensuous element in romantic art. But the shift has a different purpose than to bring the life of art to an end. The shift is wrought in part to

emphasize the differences between classical and romantic art. Hegel finds too little involvement of personal subjective life in classical art. In comparison, romantic art satisfies this lack. Hegel thus gives prominence to the subjective by deemphasizing the visible. But this does not mean that romantic art can exist apart from its sensuous form. Romantic art is compelled to operate in the realms of the visible and the sensible (*Sichbaren und Sinnlichen*) to communicate the developments of inner life (HA, 795f.).<sup>24</sup>

The need to communicate the inner workings of imagination suggests another way of looking at the changed role of sensuous form in romantic art. In classical art the visible form acts as a symbol participating as fully as possible in the ontological meaning of Absolute Spirit. But the visible form in romantic art acts more as a sign, communicating the artistic happenings of subjective life without being the main center of interest (HA, 795f.). The distinction between symbol and sign could be misleading here. It should not be understood to mean simply that the visible has no significance. Hegel is attempting to show that the significance of the visible is not due to its natural sensuous qualities but comes instead from the fact that imagination subjects the natural qualities to its own subjective purposes and thus transforms the qualities of a medium into art.<sup>25</sup>

## DISCUSSION OF PARTICULAR TEXTS

Even those who agree with the first point, that the dialectic argument fails to support the death of art thesis, may puzzle over certain of Hegel's texts that are cited in support of the thesis. The following interpretation of three principal texts suggests that they do not necessarily uphold the thesis. The texts are taken from representative major divisions of Hegel's *Lectures on Aesthetics*, one corresponding to the general idea of a philosophy of art, one to a particular form of art, and one to a particular medium. The first concerns Hegel's justification for a philosophy of art and the limits and place of art relative to religion and philosophy; the second considers the nature and implications of the dissolution of the romantic form of art; and the third concerns the role of sensuous or external form of poetry. All three bear directly and critically on the acceptance or rejection of the death of art thesis.

### *The Philosophy of Art*

"Art is and remains for us, on the side of its highest possibilities, a thing of the past" (HA, 11).<sup>26</sup> The *larger* context of the quotation is the introduction to the *Lectures on Aesthetics*, where Hegel justifies the need for a

philosophy of art. Since the statement is a part of his rationale for writing a philosophy of art, it necessarily takes on a function of apology or justification. It shows in part why Hegel is doing philosophy rather than making paintings or poems. More importantly, the statement expresses the larger need for a form of thought to accommodate the deficiencies that he sees in the art of his own age and culture. The statement expresses Hegel's belief that the critical and reflective activities of his own age are not conducive to the creation of significant art; but it should not be taken as a definitive pronouncement on the future of art for all ages. Here I agree with Gray's point that the emphasis in the passage under consideration is on the "for us," and that art will "in the evolution of ages" continue to awaken man to self-knowledge and truth.<sup>27</sup>

The *immediate* context of the quotation is a preliminary account of the reasons for making philosophy the supreme approach to Absolute Spirit. According to Hegel, art is one, but not the only and not necessarily the most adequate, expression of man's highest concerns. It is important for the argument of this paper to note that the limitations placed on art by Hegel are quite specific rather than general or all-inclusive. The limits are in terms of seeing art as the highest approach to the ultimate truths of the religious point of view of Hegel's time, or of Hegel's own Christian religious point of view. He finds art insufficient to bring the "true interests of our spiritual life to consciousness" and "no longer able to discover that satisfaction of spiritual wants, which previous epochs and nations have . . . exclusively found in it"—e.g., the good days of Greek art and the golden time of the later Middle Ages (HA, 9–10).<sup>28</sup> Though art, in Hegel's view, is not as adequate as religion or philosophy for satisfying man's spiritual wants, art nevertheless retains its place as a highly valued activity, both for Hegel and for the future. Here and elsewhere the limitations of art are stated in relative and qualified terms.

Finally, it is a part of a much larger aspect of Hegelian interpretation to decide whether the forward progress of the dialectic is a process *in time*.<sup>29</sup> In the *Phenomenology*, the dialectic is, in part, in time, and the moments in the history of a particular civilization are the movements of the dialectic. Hegel wants to speak in such a way that what he says applies to moments when religion or art or philosophy is the dominant voice in a particular historical period, say ancient Greece or modern Germany. But he doesn't necessarily want his categories of art, religion, and philosophy to be tied to these particular phenomena in history. Hegel is also timelessly locating art relative to its place in the total assortment of human values rather than asserting that art is dead because still higher values rise above it, e.g., philosophy or absolute knowledge (HA, 82–90).

Along the same lines, Hegel sees the dialectic manifesting itself in such

particular stylistic moments as the classical style of ancient Greece and the romantic style of nineteenth-century Germany. But he does not restrict the symbolic, classical, and romantic modes of art to a determined progress of the dialectic in time. These modes are timeless, universal forms of art. They, and possibly others that have yet to emerge, are necessary to provide a view of art in all its aspects and to show its relation to the whole, which is, for Hegel, the true.

### *The Dissolution of Romantic Art*

The second text to be considered occurs in a discussion of the dissolution of romantic art. "We find . . . as the termination of romantic art, the contingency of the exterior condition and internal life, and a falling asunder of the two aspects, by reason of which art commits an act of suicide."<sup>30</sup> In this context, Hegel speaks of a "falling asunder" (*Auseinanderfallen*) of the sensuous and the subjective elements of romantic art, with the result that art allegedly dissolves itself in the process (*selbst sich aufhebt*). Dissolution is interpreted by advocates of the death of art thesis to mean the death or demise of art. And this interpretation has been part of the basis for the support of the thesis. Osmaston's translation of the phrase "*Kunst selbst sich aufhebt*" into the English, "Art commits an act of suicide," may have inadvertently served to perpetuate the death of art interpretation, especially among English readers of Hegel. However, insofar as I can determine, Hegel never actually uses the phrase, "the death of art." Osmaston's translation is suggestive only in its fanciful and misleading character. Hegel's text neither benefits from nor requires translation in a manner suggesting the suicide image. The translator ignores the fact that in *aufheben* he has one of Hegel's most enigmatic terms. One of the most important notions in all of Hegel, *aufheben* literally means to raise up something; however, as a philosophical notion it can mean "cancel," "dissolve," "preserve," or all three at once! Hegel may have resorted to a certain amount of punstering to convey the essence of his dialectical method of interpreting the sensuous and the subjective elements of art. Nevertheless, *aufheben*, with its multiple connotations, assembles the several aspects of the dialectic process with admirable verbal economy.

I would like to propose an alternative to Osmaston's translation of *aufheben* based on the idea of *dissolve*, which can include the elements of both "cancel" and "preserve." It expresses the appropriate meanings of both *Auseinanderfallen* and *selbst sich aufhebt*, which are the principal terms in the text under consideration here. In this case, to dissolve is not the same as to destroy. The dissolution in romantic art is more akin to the modern cinematic principles of dissolve. In a film, to dissolve is to fade out one shot or

scene while simultaneously fading in the next, overlapping the two during the process.<sup>31</sup> The camera focuses on an object that dissolves in degrees into a near blur, only to reemerge as a distinctly new object that retains some of the qualities of the object it has replaced.

The analogous process of "dissolve" in romantic art takes place on the level of the relation between visible sensuous form and the inner subjective workings of imagination. Natural qualities of sensuous form dissolve into a new image as they are transformed by the qualities and activities of subjective imagination. In the new image, the natural qualities are retained but are "in the service of" the artist's spirit, feelings, and ideas.

The results of my application of the principle of dissolve are visible in a comparison of a Greek bust of Zeus with Rembrandt's *Portrait of a Young Man*, 1662.<sup>32</sup> The bust acts as an ideal vehicle for revealing Absolute Spirit to man's consciousness, according to Hegel's category of classical art. Its universal qualities of sensuous form are abstracted from the human form, but they retain their independence from personal subjectivity and also from complete unity with Absolute Spirit. In comparison, Rembrandt's portrait shows the dissolve of the natural sensuous qualities of color and line into a new image. It reveals the human qualities of a sensitive, fragile personality who is enigmatic in his very lack of a distinct focus. The viewer is aware of the painting's rich sensuous qualities primarily through their disclosure of the particular qualities of the subject's inner life.

A similar effect occurs in two different pictorial scenes. Monet's *Charing Cross Bridge*, 1903 shows sensuous form in the relative absence of its domination by subjective purposes. Monet arranges color and light in a manner of scientific objectivity and shows the surfaces of both the painting and its representation of the scene primarily for their sensory values. Consider also Doré's *Loch Lomond*, 1875. Compared to Monet's *Charing Cross Bridge*, *Loch Lomond* displays a strong sense of the artist's subjective vision of the nature scene. Colors and lines are no less present in the Doré painting, but they do not project their sensory values independently of displaying the artist's vision of an aura of mystery and legend.

The differences in both sets of examples are between artworks in which the sensuous qualities retain a high degree of independence and exhibit forms that are simply extensions of the natural qualities, and works in which the artist's subjective spirit dissolves the sensuous in a more personal representation. The sensuous element is not lost or abandoned. It simply becomes more evidently a vehicle to express man's inner life. If I have correctly interpreted the text referred to here, those who understand romantic art to be the death of art misunderstand Hegel's view. Romantic art is not the death of art; it is one more stage, and obviously is not the last stage in the history of art.



### *The Sensuous Element in Poetry*

The third text is in reference to poetry. "Poetry, alone among the arts, completely dispenses with the sensuous medium of the objective world of phenomena."<sup>33</sup> Its several variations, appearing throughout Hegel's long discussion of poetry, all suggest that poetry is the most successful of the arts in molding bare sensuous form to the aims of subjectivity. Advocates of the death of art thesis attempt to use such passages to support their view. However, the strength of their argument diminishes when we examine the qualifications and limits that Hegel acknowledges, and when we apply the principle of dissolve to poetry.

Hegel identifies two principal ways in which poetry is superior to the other arts: in its representational powers and in its greater success at molding sensuous form to the aims of subjectivity (HA, 960, 966). Only the latter is important for the death of art thesis because superiority in representational powers does not suggest the dissolution of art. The references to the superiority of poetry are expressed negatively by Hegel and are overstated in order to contrast poetry with the other arts. However, for each statement emphasizing poetry's dispensing with the sensuous materials, there are important qualifications that are applicable to one or all.<sup>34</sup> Hegel continues to remind us of the necessary qualifications leading to a correct sense of the negative overstatements.

A most important qualification arises from the necessity to communicate the results of the inner imaginative activity. Sensuous form remains essential for poetic communication, as it does for the other arts. It is not seen as bare matter; instead it acts as a sign that is able to transmit the qualities of emotion and idea. The communication is possible because sensuous form is transformed and elevated through the activity of imagination.

A second qualification is with respect to changes in the natural materials of the different arts. When Hegel states that poetry will have nothing to do with gross matter as such, he is simply indicating the difference between the external materials of architecture and poetry (HA, 960). In architecture the artist struggles with nature's raw materials of wood and stone. By the time art reaches the stage of poetry, its external "raw material" is language. Because language is already a product of mind, it requires less "working over" than do the materials of architecture. However, it remains that language is both thought and human speech or inscription, and poetry necessarily retains a sensuous form.

Hegel's understanding of the sensuous element in poetry can be seen clearly in examples of English romantic poetry. The English romantic theory of imagination, as it is discussed in nineteenth- and twentieth-

century literary criticism, closely parallels Hegel's view. Analogous to Hegel's idea of dissolve, imagination acts in English romantic poetry to dissolve the oppositions of emotions and ideas to the sensory elements. Coleridge speaks of the "indissoluble union between the intellectual and the material world" in these words:

The Poet's heart and intellect should be *combined*, intimately . . . and unified with the great appearances of nature, and not merely held in solution and loose mixture with them.<sup>35</sup>

The distinction between undissolved sensory material in art and the successfully dissolved can be seen in a contrast of sonnets with the same theme by William Lisle Bowles and Samuel Taylor Coleridge.<sup>36</sup> The first is Bowles's "To the River Itchin."

Itchin, when I behold thy banks again,  
Thy crumbling margin, and thy silver breast,  
On which the self-same tints still seem to rest,  
Why feels my heart the shiv'ring sense of pain?  
Is it—that many a summer's day has past  
Since, in life's morn, I carol'd on thy side?  
Is it—that oft, since then my heart has sigh'd,  
As Youth, and Hope's delusive gleams, flew fast?  
Is it—that those, who circled on thy shore,  
Companions of my youth, now meet no more?  
Whate'er the cause, upon thy banks I bend  
Sorrowing, yet feel such solace at my heart,  
As at the meeting of some long-lost friend,  
From whom, in happier hours, we wept to part.

The second is Coleridge's "To the River Otter."

Dear native Brook! wild Streamlet of the West!  
How many various-fated years have past,  
What happy and what mournful hours, since last  
I skimmed the smooth thin stone along thy breast,  
Numbering its light leaps! yet so deep imprint  
Sink the sweet scenes of childhood, that mine eyes  
I never shut amid the sunny ray,  
But straight with all their tints thy waters rise,  
Thy crossing plank, thy marge with willows grey,  
And bedded sand that veined with various dyes

Gleamed through thy bright transparence! On my way,  
 Visions of Childhood! oft have ye beguiled  
 Lone manhood's cares, yet waking fondest sighs:  
 Ah! that once more I were a careless Child!

Coleridge's poem is admittedly done in imitation of Bowles's, and both deal with the theme of recollecting a childhood experience that is no longer vital. Yet their differences exemplify an important distinction. Bowles simply sets up an associative relation between emotion and the sensuous elements of the poem. The sensuous is not integrally connected with the emotion. Compared to Bowles's poem, Coleridge's intensifies the color of sensibility with emotion and idea, giving a richness of significance that signals a fusion of ideas and emotions with sensuous material.<sup>37</sup> The poet's imagination transforms the experience of nature into feeling or thought-infused lines and brings them under the dominion of subjective spirit. Instead of the death of art, I find that the role of the sensory form is changed in accordance with the purposes of romantic art.

## CONCLUSION

My conclusion is that Hegel did not intend the death of art. He uses the principle of dialectic to show the limits of art for communicating the highest religious truths of interest to man. The dialectic also shows the respective differences among the symbolic, classical, and romantic forms of art and gives a basis for comparing them according to their common use of sensuous and subjective elements. The sensuous and the subjective elements fall apart in romantic art only in a metaphorical way of speaking, and only to dissolve into a new image that makes the subjective element more prominent for this form of art. The texts that allegedly support the death of art thesis are less puzzling when the interpreter is mindful of their respective purposes of (1) justifying philosophy of art, (2) defining art's place and limits in relation to other modes of cognition, and (3) contrasting and comparing the different forms of art. In effect, the aggregate force of the arguments offered here—the analysis of dialectic in Hegel's aesthetics, the examination of three principal texts, and the interpretation of dissolution in romantic art—recommends an interpretation that includes a future for art and warrants abandonment of the negative thesis of Croce, Heller, and Knox.

# NOTES

1. Erich Heller, *The Artist's Journey into the Interior* (New York: Vintage Books, 1968), p. 115.
2. Benedetto Croce, *Aesthetic*, trans. A. Maude (New York: Noonday Press, 1958), p. 302f.
3. Israel Knox, *The Aesthetic Theories of Kant, Hegel and Schopenhauer* (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1958), p. 103.
4. Bernard Bosanquet, "Appendix on Croce's Conception of the 'Death of Art' in Hegel," *Proc. of the British Academy* (1919), pp. 20-28.
5. M. Jacques D'Hondt, "La Mort de L'Art," *Bulletin International D'Esthetique* 17 (June 1972), p. 4.
6. Karsten Harries, "Hegel on the Future of Art," *Review of Metaphysics* 27 (June 1974), pp. 677-96.
7. J. N. Findlay, *Hegel: A Re-Examination* (New York: Collier Books, 1962), pp. 341-46. Professor Findlay has expressed in private discussions with the author the opinion that Hegel could not have intended the death of art.
8. G. W. F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of Fine Art*, trans. Osmaston (London: G. Bell & Sons, 1920), pp. 139-44. The new translation of this work by Sir T. M. Knox did not appear until after this essay was presented, but page references to his edition are given in parentheses throughout the present text following the abbreviation HA. My citations to the German text are to Friedrich Bassenge's two-volume edition (Berlin and Weimar: Aufbau-Verlag, 1965). Hereafter I will give parallel references to those in the Knox translation by citing the Bassenge edition and the Osmaston translation in the following notes.
9. See Israel Knox, *Aesthetic Theories*, p. 103, for a representative statement.
10. Israel Knox's phrase is ambiguous here. The phrase "pass in review" can apply to either logical or metaphysical stages of the idea of Absolute Spirit, or to stages in art history.
11. Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. Cherniak and Heckman (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974), p. 64. See also pp. 65 and 597.
12. Osmaston translation, I, 381-83; Bassenge edition in the German, I, 275-76.
13. Osmaston, I, 139, 143; Bassenge, I, 108. See also Nathan Rotenstreich, "The Essential and the Epochal Aspects of Philosophy," *Review of Metaphysics* 23 (1970), p. 714.
14. Rotenstreich, "Essential and Epochal Aspects," p. 714. See *Werke* (Glockner), vol. 19, p. 686.
15. Hegel differs from Schelling, who gives art the highest place in his *System of Transcendental Idealism*.
16. McTaggart notes in his discussion of the dialectic the inseparability of the dialectic in pure thought and in experience. It is inconceivable that Hegel would destroy art, the essential bridge between the two. J. M. E. McTaggart, *Studies in the Hegelian Dialectic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1896), Chaps. 1 and 2.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 1f.
18. Osmaston, III, 56; Bassenge, II, 46f.
19. Osmaston, III, 39; Bassenge, II, 33.
20. Osmaston, III, 53-56; Bassenge, II, 44-47.

21. Osmaston, III, 127f.; Bassenge, II, 99.
22. Osmaston, III, 130f.; Bassenge, II, 101.
23. Osmaston, IV, 278f., 289; Bassenge, II, 535f., 543.
24. Osmaston, III, 224; Bassenge, II, 175.
25. This interpretation is in keeping with Hegel's general philosophical practice of regarding nature as a lower form of reality in need of being transformed by the activity of mind. Nature acquires greater importance for Hegel when it is allied with mind's purposes. By analogy, so should the sensuous in art. Below, I will seek to show that the sensuous in romantic art must retain a positive role.
26. "In allen diesen Beziehungen ist und bleibt die Kunst nach der Seite ihrer höchsten Bestimmung für uns ein Vergangenes" (Bassenge, I, 22; Osmaston, I, 13).
27. J. Glenn Gray, *G. W. F. Hegel on Art, Religion, Philosophy* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1970), p. 18.
28. Osmaston, I, 11f.; Bassenge, I, 21f.
29. This point was suggested to me by an anonymous critic of an earlier version of the essay.
30. "Dadurch erhalten wir als Endpunkt des Romantischen überhaupt die Zufälligkeit des Äusseren wie des Inneren und ein Auseinanderfallen dieser Seiten, durch welches die Kunst selbst sich aufhebt und die Notwendigkeit für das Bewusstsein zieht. . . ." Knox translates this text as follows: "Therefore we acquire as the culmination of the romantic in general the contingency of both outer and inner, and the separation of these two sides, whereby art annuls itself and brings home to our minds that we must acquire higher forms for the apprehension of truth than those which art is in a position to supply" (529). Cf. Bassenge, I, 509; Osmaston, II, 296.
31. *Random House Dictionary of the English Language* (unabridged edition, 1967), p. 416.
32. The St. Louis Art Museum contains the original works cited here.
33. "Unter allen Künsten entbehrt nur die Poesia der vollen, auch sinnlichen Realität ausserer Erscheinung." Knox translates this: "Of all the arts poetry alone does not appear outwardly in something completely real and also perceptible [*sic*]" (1181), Bassenge, II, 535; Osmaston, IV, 278. Variations of the statement are found on HA, 960 and 966 (Osmaston, II, 328, 334; Bassenge, II, 960, 966).
34. See 964-66, 977-78, 1181 (Osmaston, IV, 10-13, 27-29, 278; Bassenge, II, 331-34, 343-45, 535).
35. S. T. Coleridge, *Letters* (Boston, 1895), vol. I, p. 404. Cited in William K. Wimsatt, Jr., *The Verbal Icon: Studies in the Meaning of Poetry* (New York: Noonday Press, 1958), p. 107.
36. I am indebted to Wimsatt's essay "Romantic Nature Imagery" for this example. In Wimsatt, *The Verbal Icon*, pp. 105-10.
37. *Ibid.*, pp. 106-9, 115.

# HEGEL'S THEORY OF THE CONCEPT

Merold Westphal

"The subject-matter of the philosophical science of right is the Idea of right, i.e., the concept of right together with the actualization of that concept." So begins the introduction to Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*. Since Hegel defines right in terms of freedom,<sup>1</sup> his account of the actualization of that concept is the story of how freedom is actual in the modern world. This occupies almost the entirety of Hegel's text. Thus the concept of freedom is developed for the most part not by itself but in the context of narrating its actualization. But if either the reader or the writer is to have any way of recognizing what counts in the modern world as the actuality of freedom, some prior understanding of the meaning of freedom seems to be required. It is this that the introduction seeks to provide, a purely conceptual analysis of freedom.

This analysis will of necessity be incomplete, just because of its a priori character. "The shapes which the concept assumes in the course of its actualization are indispensable for the knowledge of the concept itself" (PR, §1). To repeat, it is only when we grasp "the concept of right *together with* the actualization of that concept" (my italics) that we can adequately grasp that concept. The adequate conceptual grasp of any content can never be reached by conceptual analysis alone. Yet a prior understanding of the concept is needed to guide the discovery of that actualization of freedom that alone can provide us with an adequate conceptual grasp. It is tempting to think of this prior understanding in terms of hypothesis or conjecture, but we know from his discussions of Reinhold that Hegel rejects this suggestion out of hand.<sup>2</sup> Whence this preunderstanding of freedom, then? There can be only one Hegelian answer—from the Logic. For in Hegelian philosophy it is always the Logic that provides the conceptual wherewithal for any truly speculative understanding of nature or spirit.

The conceptual analysis of freedom presented in the introduction to the *Philosophy of Right* does not disappoint these expectations. It is indeed

derived from the Logic, in particular from the analysis of the Concept as universal, particular (or specific), and individual. This triadic structure of the Concept thus becomes the basis for getting at the genuinely speculative element in Hegel's political philosophy. My purpose here, however, is just the opposite. It is to throw a little light on the logic of the Concept by reflecting on Hegel's employment of the categories Universality, Particularity, and Individuality in developing a preunderstanding of freedom.

This procedure will no doubt make some readers uncomfortable. The Logic, we will be told, is intelligible in its own right and is first to be understood by itself as pure thought before any consideration of its employment can be legitimated. That there is something genuinely Hegelian about this response I do not deny. But there is something equally Hegelian about my own procedure as well. After all, for Hegel the truth is the whole, and no part of philosophical science can be fully understood apart from its detailed relations to the others. I have just quoted Hegel's claim that the concept of right or freedom cannot adequately be understood apart from the shapes of its actualization in the world. I am taking this in the strong sense to mean that even the concepts from the Logic that go into spelling out that convenient concept of freedom to which the introduction is devoted cannot be adequately understood in and by themselves, but only when we see them at work in the *Philosophy of Right* and elsewhere.

It is in this sense that I understand Hegel's "knowing before you know" (or don't go into the water before you have learned how to swim) critique of critical philosophy. In a paper presented to the Hegel Society of America at Notre Dame in 1972, John Smith reminds us that Hegel praised the critical project of examining the categories and directed his criticism only toward the tendency to separate such criticism from "first order" knowing, thus examining the categories while they were "idling." "Hegel's fundamental complaint, then, is that Kant analyzed the categories as functions of thought, not when they were functioning in actual knowing, but only in their status as necessary conditions for knowing." In support of this suggestion Smith quotes from Section 41, *Zusatz* of the *Encyclopedia*, where Hegel writes, "So that what we want is to combine in our process of inquiry the action of the forms of thought with a criticism of them."<sup>3</sup> This requirement seems to me at best to be only partially satisfied in the Logic itself. Thus it serves as another justification for seeking to understand the Logic in terms of its so-called application. The activity of the categories of Universality, Particularity, and Individuality in Hegel's political theory belongs to the deduction, analysis, and criticism of them in his Logic.

Methodologically, then, I believe my project has ample Hegelian validation. But I claim no scientific status for my attempt at interpretation. This humility is strategically motivated, I hasten to confess, for it leaves me free



to invoke hypotheses and test them out, which is what I intend to do. My initial hypothesis is that the following sentence from the *Zusatz* to Section 7 of the *Philosophy of Right* is the key to the logic of the Concept: "Freedom in this sense, however, we already possess in the form of feeling—in friendship and love, for instance." The meaning of my hypothesis is both (1) that the structure of the concept as Universality, Particularity, and Individuality is necessary to an adequate understanding of friendship and love, and (2) that if we think through the meaning of friendship and love adequately we will have developed the structure of the Concept as Universality, Particularity, and Individuality. Since I am trying to work toward the Logic and not from it, it is obviously the latter form of the hypothesis that I explore.

The suggestion that friendship and love are the true meaning of freedom follows a summary of Sections 5 through 7, which define freedom in terms of the triadic structure of the Concept. Although Hegel once suggested that Universality, Particularity, and Individuality are abstractly the same as Identity, Difference, and Ground (ELW, §164), they here function as Indeterminacy, Determination, and Self-Determination. Since these categories have an obvious bearing on the question of freedom, the task is to see how the original triad can legitimately be translated into them.

The first equivalence is that of Universality with Indeterminacy. Hegel puts it this way:

The will contains ( $\alpha$ ) the element of pure indeterminacy or that pure reflection of the ego into itself which involves the dissipation of every restriction and every content either immediately presented by nature, by needs, desires, and impulses, or given and determined by any means whatever. This is the unrestricted infinity of absolute abstraction or universality, the pure thought of oneself. (PR, §5)

Freedom involves the ability to abstract from every dependence upon an other, and since it is always and only in relation to an other that anything is determinate and not the "indeterminate immediacy" of pure being, freedom involves "my flight from every content as from a restriction" (PR, §5).<sup>4</sup>

There is a freedom that takes this moment of independence as its whole meaning. Theoretically it is "the Hindu fanaticism of pure contemplation" in which the fundamental structures of the self's being in the world are systematically undermined. Practically it is exhibited in the terror of the French Revolution with its "irreconcilable hatred of everything particular [*jedes Besondere*]," i.e., everything determinate in the social order (PR, §5-z). "Only in destroying something does this negative will possess the feeling of itself as existent." This freedom professes to serve some new and



better actuality but cannot do so, for any such actuality "leads at once to some sort of order, to a particularization [*Besonderung*] of organizations and individuals alike; while it is precisely out of the annihilation of particularity [*Besonderung*] and objective characterization that the self-consciousness of this negative freedom proceeds." Hegel indicates the one-sidedness of this freedom as absolute independence by curtly calling it "freedom as the Understanding conceives it" (PR, §5).<sup>5</sup>

The second equivalence is already before us, that of Particularity and Determination, for it matters little whether the content from which this negative freedom flees as from a restriction is called *Besonderheit* or *Bestimmtheit*. But freedom that would be actual cannot flee forever. For "my willing is not pure willing but the willing of something. A will which, like that expounded in Section 5, wills only the abstract universal, wills nothing and is therefore no will at all" (PR, §6-z). To will something the will must include the moment of "the finitude or particularization [*Besonderung*] of the ego," which is described in this way:

(β) At the same time, the ego is also the transition from undifferentiated indeterminacy to the differentiation, determination, and positing of a determinacy as a content and object. Now further, this content may either be given by nature or engendered by the concept of spirit. (PR, §6)

This latter qualification is important, for it indicates that the other, which cannot be excluded from freedom, is of two sorts: natural, that is, the impulses and inclinations (*Triebe und Neigungen*) of immediate selfhood in their otherness to rational self-determination; and spiritual, that is, both social institutions and concrete other selves in their otherness to the independence of the self who would be free. This second moment, Particularity or Determination, is no less essential to freedom than the first. For the self that can respond to its own natural immediacy and to the other selves around it only by withdrawal or destruction cannot be said to be free. On the other hand, this moment by itself is just as abstract and inadequate as the first. For the self that is only a function of its impulses and inclinations or of the other selves it encounters is no more free than the self that flees from every content as from a restriction. Indeed, it can scarcely be called a self at all.

Only a caricature of freedom arises, then, when either the moment of Universality=Indeterminacy or that of Particularity=Determination is asked by itself to provide a definition. But neither moment can be eliminated from the concept of freedom. What is needed is a genuine unity of the two, antithetical as they seem. We already know that the unity of Universality and Particularity will be called Individuality, and we might guess

that the unity of Indeterminacy and Determination will be called Self-Determination, though in both cases, as in calling happiness the highest good, the task of comprehension lies ahead and not behind. Hegel writes:

(γ) The will is the unity of both these moments. It is particularity reflected into itself and so brought back to universality, i.e., it is individuality. It is the *self-determination* of the ego, which means that at one and the same time the ego posits itself as its own negative, i.e., as restricted and determinate, and yet remains by itself, i.e., in its self-identity and universality. (PR, §7)

Three comments on this passage may help us get to the heart of the matter. First, it serves to validate the third equivalence, that of Individuality and Self-Determination. Self-determination is defined as the preservation of self-identity in the process of determination. Only that which is in some strong sense individual can endure determination without becoming simply a function of those others through whom this determination is mediated. Such endurance involves the retention of more than that logical self-identity that permits one to be an object of reference or the subject of predication. It requires that real self-identity, which is here equated with the moment of universality, which, as we have seen, is the moment of independence.

Second, we are referred directly back to the Logic, where this unity of self-identity and determinateness is central. We can now understand why, when Hegel calls the Concept "the principle of freedom," he goes right on to say, "Thus in its *self-identity* it has original and complete determinateness." And when defining the structure of the Concept in terms of its three moments, he describes Individuality as the unity of Universality and Particularity, "which negative self-unity has complete and original *determinateness*, without any loss to its *self-identity* or universality."<sup>6</sup>

Third, Hegel calls this unity of self-identity and determination that constitutes Self-Determination or Individuality "the innermost secret of speculation," though the Understanding disdains it as "inconceivable" (PR, §7). The passage before us indicates both why the synthesis is so easily dismissed as inconceivable and how we may begin to conceive it after all. Self-determination means determination, which means that the self stands in relation to its own negative, to another through whom its determination is mediated. The self is thus *dependent* upon the other for its determinateness. Yet, if this is to be self-determination, it must be a self-mediating activity, and the self must retain its self-identity and universality, i.e., its *independence*. Hegel here uses one of his favorite locutions, *bei sich bleiben*.<sup>7</sup> This means to keep control of oneself, to stay conscious and not pass out. The task, which Understanding finds impossible, is to remain in control of oneself while giving oneself up to the mediating activity of the other, so that

the whole operation can be called a self-mediating activity and not something that happens while one is unconscious, after which one comes to again learn about one's new determinateness. It could then be said that "the ego determines itself insofar as it is the relating of negativity to itself" (PR, §7), or that the self is *Vermittlung* but not *ein Vermitteltes* (WL, II, 241=SL, 602).

This is possible, according to Hegel, because self-determination means "that at one and the same time *the ego posits itself* as its own negative, i.e., as restricted and determinate, and yet remains by itself" (PR, §7).<sup>8</sup> We have already seen that the self cannot be determinate except in relation to an other, and that it cannot be free if this relation is either withdrawal or destruction. But if this other is in some sense itself, the possibility of a more positive relation begins to lose its inconceivability. The only problem is that this solution sounds a bit too Fichtean.<sup>9</sup> The otherness of the other seems compromised.

At this point Hegel's earlier allusion to the categories of Identity, Difference, and Ground is helpful, for it reminds us that for Hegel identity always involves some difference. If the other through whom the self is determined must in some sense be identical with that self, we must inquire more carefully what that sense may be. A second formulation from Section 7 calls for our attention.

Still, both these moments [self-consciousness as universal and as particular] are only abstractions: what is concrete and true (and everything true is concrete) is the universality which has the particular as its opposite: but [only] that particular which by its reflection into itself has been equalized with the universal.

Here otherness sounds less Fichtean. It has the status of an opposite (*Gegensatz*). But it must have become equalized (*ausgeglichen*) with that to which it stands opposed. We are not told which way the scale must be tipped to bring about this balance. Whether the reflection into itself of the other that confronts the self is a scaling down of its power and activity so that it does not overwhelm the self or a scaling up of its dignity so that its activity is of the same sort as that of the self, the result is that the self and its other are somehow on a par. They are not the same in the sense of numerical identity but of qualitative similarity. This seems the opposite extreme from the Fichtean overtones of the previous formulation. If one thinks of the struggle for recognition in the *Phenomenology*, for example, it seems that neither way of looking at it will do. For if the other from whom the self seeks the determination of recognition is numerically identical with itself, there can be no acceptance of the claim to human dignity but only the repetition of that claim. But if the other is the same as the self in the weaker sense of being qualitatively similar, equal in being another full-blooded

human self, we can see nothing in such equality to weaken the Understanding's suspicion that the self must either destroy the selfhood of the other by becoming its master or give up its own by becoming the slave, in neither case achieving freedom.

Turning to the *Zusatz* to Section 7 for help we find a definition of freedom in terms of the three moments of the Concept. It repeats the familiar idea that the self posits itself as its other yet remains by itself in this other; but it provides us with no assistance in making sense out of these Hegelian clichés. Just at this point, however, occurs the sentence that is central to my hypothesis for interpreting Hegel. "Freedom in this sense, however, we already possess in the form of feeling—in friendship and love, for instance." The explanation continues:

Here we are not inherently one-sided; we restrict ourselves gladly in relating ourselves to another, but in this restriction know ourselves as ourselves. In this determinacy a man should not feel himself determined; on the contrary, since he treats the other as other, it is there that he first arrives at the feeling of his own self-hood. Thus freedom lies neither in indeterminacy nor in determinacy; it is both of these at once.

Guided by these descriptions and reminded of whatever experiences of true friendship or love we may have had, we suddenly see how the abstract antithesis between numerical identity and mere qualitative sameness does not exhaust the possibilities. Genuine otherness is preserved, since friendship and love require numerical duality and not numerical identity. Yet we can speak of identity and not mere qualitative sameness, for friends and lovers are not merely different numerical units of the same sort—they constitute together a new reality, which they express by saying "we." This whole is more than the sum of its parts. As its coconstituents the parts are identical with each other, for each of them is that *we* just as much as each is also a distinct *I*.<sup>10</sup>

Such reflections on the way friends and lovers relate to their counterparts illuminate the kind of identity with difference that the Concept expresses. This confirms Hegel's own view that the theory of the Concept is a theory of freedom, of personality, and of that sense of ego that the slave lacks (ELW, §163-z). When loving intersubjectivity is taken as basic, two conspicuous features of the logical exposition of the Concept appear in a new light, namely the ubiquity of the concept of creativity and the transition from Essence to Concept—more specifically, the development of the triadic structure of the Concept from the category of reciprocity.

The creation motif is never far from sight. The Concept is *unendliche, schöpferische Form, freie, schöpferische Tätigkeit*, or simply *schöpferische Macht*.

It is *das Formierende und Erschaffende*; and one can speak of *das Schaffen des Begriffs*, or even of the idea as *Schöpferin der Natur*.<sup>11</sup>

All this tells us that the Concept is something active and not inert. In its individuality the Concept is *das Wirkende* (EL, §163). Frequently Hegel expresses this central theme in Aristotelian language, the concept being related to its objectivity, as soul to body or seed to plant.<sup>12</sup> We are given a theory of development that at first appears to be but a restatement of the Aristotelian theory of substantial form as the merger of formal, final, and efficient causality. But Aristotle's is a theory of life, not of spirit, and although Hegel recognizes the Concept to be "the principle of all life" (ELW, §160-z) and the organic level to be "the stage of nature at which the Concept emerges" (WL, II, 224=SL, 586), it is only at the level of spirit that its true meaning is manifest. This means that no Aristotelian interpretation of Hegel's creation talk will be adequate. As creative the Concept is *das Wirkende* indeed, but the organic-developmental models of soul-body and seed-plant give at best a partial account of this. For, as we have seen, the theory of the Concept is a theory of intersubjective selfhood and thus of spirit. Its task is to give an account of determinateness through an other such that this "is not a *limit*, as though it were related to another *beyond* it [*einem Jenseits*]" (WL, II, 245=SL, 605). How does the concept of creation contribute to this central problem?

The *Zusatz* to Section 161 of the *Encyclopedia* is of special importance in this connection. Although both the original paragraph and the first long paragraph of the *Zusatz* are devoted to the Aristotelian developmental aspects of the Concept, the final brief paragraph goes beyond this to the level of spirit.

The movement of the concept is as it were to be looked upon merely as play: the other which it sets up is in reality not an other. Or, as it is expressed in the teaching of Christianity: not merely has God created a world which confronts Him as an other; He has also from all eternity begotten a Son in whom He, a Spirit, is at home with Himself [*bei sich selbst ist*].

Three models of the self in relation to its other are given here. In play the other is not really an other, but the figment of the self's active imagination.

Remember Jackie Paper and his play with Puff the Magic Dragon? Unhappily for Puff, when "Jackie Paper came no more," he ceased to roar. "His head was bent in sorrow . . . without his lifelong friend, Puff could not be brave, so Puff that mighty dragon sadly slipped into his cave."

The strength of this model is that it completely removes the *Jenseits*

character of the other for the self; its weakness is that the other is somewhat ephemeral. The freedom of the child at play is total, but not very real.

The second model is that of God as creator in relation to the world. Since the world depends on God for its continued existence, it is sometimes viewed as no more truly other to God than Puff was to Jackie Paper. But creation is more often seen as an exercise of omnipotence voluntarily limiting itself, giving genuine otherness to the world. This is the view Hegel has in mind, for although the other of play is "in reality not an other," when God creates the world it "confronts him as an other." The strength of this model is obviously that otherness gains integrity; its weakness is that otherness can all too easily emerge once again as a *Jenseits*, outside the reconciliation of the Concept. This possible obstinate otherness is not incorrigible. As creator, God could either destroy the world he made or abandon it. But we have already seen that destruction and withdrawal are anything but the freedom Hegel is seeking to grasp; and nothing in the concept of creator suggests that God has any options but these in the face of a world turned hostile.

The third model is that of the eternal love between the Father and the Son. As eternal the Son is truly other, neither imaginary like Puff nor contingent like the world. But although otherness is most complete in this model there is no estrangement or hostility here. For in place of the child's sovereignty over his imaginary playmates and God's over the created world, the relation here is that of reciprocal love. Only in love is even God able to be *bei sich selbst* in his other. Though Hegel doesn't mention it here, this holds for his relation to the world as well. For it is only as redeemer, not simply as creator, that God can be at peace with the world. It is the God who loved the world who sent his Son, not to be its judge but its savior (John 3:16-17).

It is now possible to give Hegel's creation talk its proper place in his theory of the Concept. By itself it is not an adequate model of the conceptual structure being developed. But it helps to express two essential elements of that structure. The first is the active, effective nature of the self as *das Wirkende*. The other is that aspect of love that Hegel especially wishes to highlight, the non-otherness of the most genuinely other (PR, §158-z). Taken together, the three models we have just examined are not just a progressive series. The first two belong to the third as part of its meaning. In love the threatening aspects of otherness are as thoroughly eliminated as in play and creation (but without having to eliminate otherness as such, and with the benefits that only real otherness can confer). In love the other does not owe its existence to me, but we are so related that I feel no need of that sort of power over the other in order to be myself. I can live in the real world without resort to the pathological fantasies in which I elevate myself



to the role of creator and reduce the world to a collective Puff with whom I play in childish sovereignty.<sup>13</sup>

Lest we get carried away here we must remember that the Logic does not try to tell us how or where this freedom as loving reciprocity is to be realized. It tells us only what it is to be free. It does so, however, by calling our attention to the fact that love is only a special form of reciprocity and that there is another reciprocity that is not freedom at all. It is this contrast between two reciprocities that constitutes the transition from Essence to Concept in the Logic.

As a category of Essence, Reciprocity expresses a world wholly subject to natural necessity. It is composed of substances, thus of independent and self-sufficient units. It is a world, however, not a chaotic multiplicity, solely because these units do have one mode of relation to one another, causal necessity. Since they are both active and passive, cause and effect in relation to one another, causal necessity has the form of Reciprocity.

In this world independence and identity are mutually exclusive. Causal necessity involves a special form of identity. The effect, being simply the expression or unfolding of the cause, loses its independence and becomes simply an aspect of the cause's career. As the distinction between them vanishes, they become identical. The attempt to see the world exclusively and consistently from this point of view leads to Spinozism, where the world has only one substance in it, or, alternatively, to the Laplacian way of saying the same thing in a different language. If, as the category of Reciprocity itself suggests, some plurality is to be preserved, it must be accomplished by viewing the units that make up the world in abstraction from their causal relations, as external and contingent in relation to one another. I have no difficulty, for example, viewing the misfortunes of my beloved and bumbling Chicago Cubs as wholly unrelated to the political climate in Washington. In Reciprocity as a category of Essence, I alternate between two incompatible viewpoints: one that views the units of the world as mutually indifferent to one another, and one that views them as so tightly bound together by natural necessity that they lose their independent identity. Clearly neither of these represents freedom in Hegel's sense.

If there is to be a reciprocity that does constitute freedom, it must overcome the mutual exclusiveness of independence and identity. It is in just these terms that Hegel states the transition to the Concept.<sup>14</sup> The truth of necessity is freedom, we are told, and that of substance is the Concept. For reciprocity can be seen as infinite, negative self-relation; negative in that it involves the independence of actualities in relation to one another, but infinite because "their independence only lies in their identity" (ELW, §§157-58). This harmony of independence and identity is crucial to freedom. The old identity excludes independence.

The identity [*Einheit*] of the things, which necessity presents as bound to each other and thus bereft of their independence, is at first [i.e. while Reciprocity is still a category of Essence] only inward, and therefore has no existence for those under the yoke of necessity. (ELW, §158-z)<sup>15</sup>

Where identity has this character it not only leaves the so-called individuals "bereft of their independence" but also deprives them of any awareness or enjoyment of their identity. There is no experience of love or of community. But there is another kind of identity.

It then appears that the members, linked to one another, are not really foreign to each other, being, as it were, at home, and combining with itself [*bei sich selbst ist und mit sich selbst zusammengeht*]. In this way necessity is transfigured into freedom. (ELW, §158-z)

Just as we have previously seen Hegel describe love as a contradiction and the unity of the concept as inconceivable to the Understanding, we now are reminded that it is not exactly easy to think this unity of identity and independence. "The passage from necessity to freedom, or from actuality into the concept, is the very hardest, because it proposes that independent actuality shall be thought as having all its substantiality in the passing over and identity with the other independent actuality." Once again, to help us get headed in the right direction, Hegel tells us that love is what he is talking about, love as the liberation that can also be called I, free spirit, and blessedness (ELW, §159).<sup>16</sup>

I have been discussing the theory of the Concept as a theory of freedom rather than as a theory of knowledge, as a theory of the practical rather than the theoretical self. Of course, Hegel would not have called this part of the Logic by the name *Concept* if his theory were not also a theory of knowledge (and the object of knowledge as well). But in spite of saying "Concept" instead of "Freedom" when naming the final level of categorial development, Hegel himself seems to give the epistemological part of his theory a secondary place.

The Concept, when it has developed into a concrete existence that is itself free, is none other than the I or pure self-consciousness. True, I have concepts, that is to say, determinate concepts; but the I is the pure Concept itself which, as the Concept, has come into existence. (WL, II, 220=SL, 583)

However we interpret this contrast between the self's being the Concept and its having concepts, a complete analysis of Hegel's theory of the Concept would have to develop its epistemological discussions, which are constantly and overtly interspersed throughout the discussion of freedom to which I have limited myself up to this point. My first hypothesis, that love



is the key to the structure of the Concept, would be enhanced both in strength and in philosophical interest if a second, corollary hypothesis could be established, namely that the theory of loving intersubjectivity, which is the direct meaning of the Concept as a theory of the practical self, is the guiding metaphor for the theory of knowledge, which has reached the same level of philosophical insight. In other words, knowing is also to be understood in its highest form as the nonviolent unity of the self and its other. In the space and time remaining to me I can but outline such a reading of Hegel's text.

Hegel regularly contrasts his view of the Concept with that of the Understanding, which is one of an abstract universal, devoid of particularity and individuality. It is thus without content of its own, the mere form of our subjective thought. Two features of this view are especially stressed, the independence of the object and the subjectivity of thinking.

The independence of the object consists of its being unconditioned in relation to the concepts through which it is thought. It is there first, standing ready-made, possessed of its being and truth prior to any rendezvous with the concept. The content thus falls on the side of the object. The concept is an empty and inert form that comes to it from without. This kind of thinking is subjective, for it is separated from its truth. The truth is supposed to reside in the content or object, and thinking is entirely the activity of the subject. The abstract universals employed in such thinking are generated, as their name suggests, through the activity of abstracting; and it is the knowing subject who must perform this operation of neglecting some features presented to consciousness while focusing attention on others. Since it is the contingent purpose of the knower that directs this process, it can also be said that an interest external to the subject matter presides over this whole domain of thinking.

In this view the truth of the object is not an intelligibility or meaning it can reveal to us but rather a brute otherness that we must forge weapons to overcome. Abstract universals are those weapons, by means of which we hope to deprive the object of its original independence and render it subject to our purposes and interests. Knowing is the desire to master and dominate. Without any specific reference to technological purposes and interests, Hegel has described the essence of calculative thinking.

Knowledge at the level of the Concept contrasts sharply. This highest kind of knowing, attested by both religion and philosophy (WL, II, 225-26=SL, 587-88), assumes that things have their being and truth by virtue of the Concept at work within them. The form by which they are known is identical with the form by which they are what they are. Since the form is already present in the content, Hegel can say, "*dass wir die Begriffe gar nicht bilden*" (EL, §163-z2). We do not need to impose our external purposes on

the processes of thought. This is not to say that knowledge, any more than love itself, is entirely devoid of interest. It is to say that the subject no longer seeks to use the object. The guiding interest is no longer the subject's private purpose, but its openness to the object so that the object may reveal both itself and the subject for what they are. In thus giving itself up to the object, the subject does not discover that in ceasing to be the master it has become the slave. The impetus toward domination is undermined as a new identity takes shape. For the form that is the truth of the thing and the form that is the thought of the subject are one and the same.

Hegel, as is his wont, lapses into lyricism.

The universal is therefore free power; it is itself and takes its other within its embrace [*greift über sein Anderes über*], but without doing violence to it; on the contrary, the universal is, in its other, in peaceful communion with itself. We have called it free power, but it could also be called free love and boundless blessedness, for it bears itself towards its other as towards its own self; in it, it has returned to itself. (WL, II, 242=SL, 603)<sup>17</sup>

We might call this the golden rule of the Concept. For Hegel it is the norm for philosophical knowledge as well as for life with our neighbors.

## NOTES

1. *Philosophy of Right*, §29. The *Philosophy of Right* and the Lesser Logic of the *Encyclopedia* will be cited by the paragraph numbers that are common to all editions and with the abbreviations PR and EL, respectively. *The Logic of Hegel* will be cited using the abbreviation ELW. Where *Zusätze* are indicated, a z will follow the paragraph number. The translations of Knox and Wallace will be followed with minor alterations, mostly pertaining to italics. The *Science of Logic* will be cited with pages from both the Felix Meiner edition, edited by Georg Lasson (WL), and the Miller translation (SL), which I follow with minor alterations. I have regularly substituted *concept* for *notion* as a translation of *Begriff*.
2. EL, §10; WL, I, 55ff.; and *Differenzschrift, Gesammelte Werke* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1968), IV, 77ff.
3. "Hegel's Critique of Kant," *The Review of Metaphysics* 26 (March 1973), pp. 441-45. Italics are Smith's.
4. Cf. WL, II, 220=SL, 583: "Ich aber ist diese *erstlich* reine, sich auf sich beziehende Einheit, und dies nicht unmittelbar, sondern indem es von aller Bestimmtheit und Inhalt abstrahiert und in die Freiheit der schrankenlosen Gleichheit mit sich selbst zurückgeht."
5. It is helpful to recall Hegel's analysis of skepticism and of the terror in the *Phenomenology*.
6. EL, §160 and §163, my italics. Cf. WL, II, 219=SL, 582.
7. Hegel uses *bei sich sein* more or less interchangeably with *bei sich bleiben*, though

it obviously hasn't quite the active sense of the latter. Present translations frequently render *bei sich* as "at home."

8. My italics.
9. Especially in view of Hegel's critique of Fichte in §6.
10. Cf. Hegel's stress on Rousseau's distinction between *volonté générale* and *volonté de tous*, EL, §163-z, and his analysis of the *we* constituted in marriage by contrast with that of contract, PR, §75 and §158ff.-z.
11. These phrases occur, respectively, at EL, §160-z; §163-z; WL, II, 244-45=SL, 605; WL, II, 242=SL, 603; WL, II, 245=SL, 605; and WL, II, 231=SL, 592. Cf. EL, §163-z: "Rather the Concept is the genuine first; and things are what they are through the action of the Concept, immanent in them, and revealing itself in them. In religious language we express this by saying that God created the world out of nothing. In other words, the world and finite things have issued from the fullness of the divine thoughts and the divine decrees."
12. WL, II, 236=SL, 597; WL, II, 242=SL, 602; EL, §161-z; PR, §1-z.
13. Cf. R. D. Laing, *The Self and Others*, Part One.
14. EL, §§157-59. Cf. WL, II, 214-19=SL, 578-82.
15. Cf. WL, II, 218=SL, 581: "Dieser, die aus der Wechselwirkung resultierende Totalität, ist die Einheit der *beiden Substanzen* der Wechselwirkung, so dass sie aber nunmehr der Freiheit angehören, indem sie nicht mehr ihre Identität als ein Blindes, das heisst *Innerliches*"; and WL, II, 224=SL, 586: "Das Leben oder die organische Natur ist diese Stufe der Natur, auf welcher der Begriff hervortritt; aber als blinder, sich selbst nicht fassender, d.h. nicht denkender Begriff."
16. Cf. the quotation with which this essay concludes.
17. Cf. WL, II, 246=SL, 606, where Hegel uses the same notion of *übergreifen* that Miller here renders as "embrace." Thus, "Das Allgemeine als der Begriff ist es selbst und sein Gegenteil, was wieder es selbst als seine gesetzte Bestimmtheit ist; es greift über dasselbe über und ist in ihm bei sich."

# THE CATEGORY OF CONTINGENCY IN THE HEGELIAN LOGIC

George di Giovanni

The immediate aim of the present study is the relatively narrow one of analyzing a section of Hegel's "greater Logic" that deals with the modal categories in order to understand what Hegel means by "contingency." The study should be viewed, however, in the context of a problem that is as old as the history of Hegelian criticism and has recently been brought again to the center of scholarly attention because of new research done on the development of Hegel's thought during the crucial formative years of the Jena period. I now try to indicate the problem and show how the study that follows relates to it.

## THE PROBLEM

It appears that even at the beginning of his stay at Jena, when Hegel was closely collaborating with Schelling, he had already assumed an attitude toward philosophy that set him quite apart from his mentor, and even put him on the side of Fichte. In the *Differenzschrift* Hegel had assigned to philosophy (not to art, as Schelling had) the function of reconciling thought with nature, reflection with immediacy.<sup>1</sup> However, as Heinz Kimmerle has rightly pointed out, in taking this step Hegel had in fact accepted Fichte's criticism of Schelling.<sup>2</sup> He had admitted to the futility of trying to gain a standpoint that transcends the limits of reflection. Schelling's Philosophy of Nature still remained philosophy; his appeal to art was done from the side of thought and in order to resolve a problem created by reflection. At best Schelling had mediated the thought of thought with the thought of nature. He had left untouched the issue of how reflection can overcome the disproportion that separates it from the fact of nature. It does not follow, of course, that Hegel could have accepted Fichte's notion of nature as a surd that perpetually eludes the reflection of thought. For him, just as for

Schelling, thought must be able to recognize itself in nature. However, the subtle modification brought to Schelling's position in the *Differenzschrift* indicates that for Hegel the ground for the reconciliation (i.e., the moment of identity between thought and nature) must be sought from within the standpoint of reflection.

We know that at Jena, Hegel repeatedly lectured on Logic and metaphysics, and that at first he conceived the Logic as an introduction to metaphysics. We also know that he quickly came to the realization that the two sciences ought to be combined into a single one (a new "Logic") that would be at once logic and metaphysics. Hegel thus withdrew from the Logic its introductory role and assigned it to a science of experience on which he had been working, and which finally took the form of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*.<sup>3</sup> It is clear, therefore, how Hegel moved to counter Fichte's objection to Schelling's philosophy. He opposed the idea of a science that, as the elaboration of the concept of thought (viz., as logic), would equally be science of being (viz., metaphysics). In order to break out of Fichte's impasse vis-à-vis nature, he did not try to assume a standpoint that transcends thought. He proposed to show, instead, that it is possible for thought to recognize the fact of nature as a moment of its life as thought.

At Jena, therefore, the idea is already present for the latter system. Also present, however, are the elements for the objection that the critics of the system have constantly raised against it.<sup>4</sup> If it is granted to Hegel that the essence of nature is thought, it is indeed undeniable that the difficulty facing both Schelling and Fichte disappears. No opposition is possible between real mediation of thought with nature and the merely reflective synthesis of the concept of one with the concept of the other, for the distinction between real and ideal has lost its force. However, Hegel's feat in removing the difficulty is accomplished only at the price of idealizing even the fact of nature. And although to Hegel's eyes the idealism of Fichte and Schelling might have appeared inconsistent for having allowed the difficulty to stand, Hegel's own system can be charged with lack of seriousness precisely because it pretends to have made the mediation between thought and nature complete. The system undercuts all problems of mediation by the simple device of removing within the magic circle of idealistic thought all the material we normally look for in the real world.<sup>5</sup>

I am ready to introduce at this point the theme of the paper. In classical metaphysics contingency has always denoted a limitation of reason. A contingent event (as contingent) is an element of reality impervious to full rationalization. Its occurrence must be accepted without explanation; and any theory suggesting that it is possible to account for it would in fact be denying that "contingency" has objective meaning. However, as Dieter Henrich argued in a 1958 article, Hegel's philosophy is unique in that it

maintains the necessity of contingency.<sup>6</sup> It claims that it is possible to comprehend it in thought. Hegel thus tries to avoid the classical alternative posed by contingency (viz., either "contingency" has only subjective meaning, or reality is not fully rational) in the same way in which he tries to resolve the impasse reached by the idealism of his contemporaries. He reintroduces *within* reason what would otherwise appear as a limitation affecting it from without. And this move is only to be expected. For contingency is the essential feature that distinguishes the fact of nature from the thought of it. And if Hegel's system is to comprehend the fact of nature, it must be able to comprehend it precisely as contingent.

The case of contingency thus offers an excellent test by which to measure the seriousness of Hegel's claim to "complete mediation." It also provides, however, a criterion by which to judge the accuracy of whatever notion we might have of what Hegel means by that claim. If Hegel can show that contingency need not be merely presupposed, but that the inevitability of its presence can be understood—moreover, if he can show that in thus comprehending contingency, he does not reduce it to necessity—then Hegel has managed to break free from the circle of idealistic thought. He has demonstrated that it is possible to recognize the reality of contingency without having to step outside the limits of logical reflection. But a reflection that accomplishes a feat of this sort must be of a very special kind. And one can inquire in all fairness whether, rather than bringing to its logical conclusion the idealism of his contemporaries, Hegel has not in fact grounded it on a completely new basis.<sup>7</sup>

There are indications that clearly point in the latter direction. Consider, for instance, how thought develops in the *Logic*. Its movement depends on the tension created within each category between what the category intends to signify (or signifies formally, or explicitly) and what it signifies in actual fact (or implicitly). Let me elaborate on this point, using an example that will also allow me to introduce the two categories of possibility and actuality with which we shall be concerned later.<sup>8</sup> Consider how these two categories differ from two others—the categories of essence and immediacy, which appear at an earlier stage of the *Logic*. There is obviously much in common between the two sets of categories. Both presuppose, as a condition for signifying an object, that a distinction is recognized between the presence of the object as mere fact and the reflection that justifies its being present. However, the degree to which the distinction has become part of the formal signification of the four categories differs considerably from one set to the other. The explicit intention of essence and immediacy is to each signify one side of the distinction to the total exclusion of the other. Essence intends to signify the object exclusively as reflection within itself: as pure explanatory ground. Immediacy, for its part, intends to signify it exclu-

sively as mere fact. But the formal intention of the two categories is clearly self-defeating. For if it were ever realized, it would destroy upon realization the context within which it makes sense to refer to an object as either essence or mere fact. The two categories, therefore, are made to suffer a strange fate at the hands of Hegel's dialectic. Although each means to express only one side of the distinction, both are shown to signify one side as well as the other. Essence can just as well be mere fact, and any fact can be taken as the basis for an explanation. In the course of the dialectic, a disproportion is revealed between the formal intention of the two categories and what they signify in actual fact.<sup>9</sup>

With actuality and possibility, the situation is quite different. The object they both signify is one that, on presenting itself to an observing subject, does not remain mere fact but proffers a reason for its presence. But possibility refers to the object taking its starting point from the explanatory ground the object would offer were it to become actually present. Actuality, on the other hand, refers to it starting from the opposite direction. It signifies the object as already present—but with a presence achieved on the basis of a ground that (albeit not obvious in some cases) can in principle always be adduced. The relation that holds between the two categories is explicitly ambiguous. Their meaning is definitely not identical. On the contrary, it is true to say that to the extent that an object is only possible, it is not actual; to the extent that it is actual, it is no longer merely possible. The meaning of one category excludes that of the other. Yet it is equally true to say that the two categories are complementary—that each points to the other as completing its own line of signification. Actuality is still possibility, but possibility as achieved. Possibility is already actuality, but actuality as merely adumbrated. One can also legitimately claim, therefore, that the more possible something is, the closer it is to being actual; and the more actual, the more entitled to the claim of being possible.

Possibility and actuality thus overcome the abstractness of essence and immediacy. They include in their formal signification the ambivalence that for the other set of categories had been a *de facto* result. In this way they manage to express formally what they would otherwise signify only in actual fact; they are no longer subject, therefore (at least, not in the same sense), to the same process that has reduced to mere abstractions the previous expressions of the logical object.

Now, a discrepancy between the intention of any given category in the Logic and the determination that it actually brings to the logical object manifests itself under one form or another at every stage of the Logic. The discrepancy conditions the logical development by injecting into it an element of immediacy. I do not mean to say that the movement of thought



in the Logic is subject to the same historical vicissitudes as the development of consciousness in the *Phenomenology*.<sup>10</sup> The Logic is the science of pure thought. From beginning to end it is nothing but a reflection of thought upon itself. However, I must stress that for Hegel even pure thought is at first present to itself only immediately. In fact, its appearance at the beginning of the Logic is so immediate that it can be articulated only indirectly.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, until the final reflection takes place, which reinterprets all the categories that have appeared up to that point as the content of the Idea,<sup>12</sup> the logical movement tends to fall (because of the immediacy by which it is affected) into a series of abstract thought expressions only implicitly connected with one another. The sense of the whole movement is made explicit only by the comments provided by the concrete subject engaged in the Logic—the philosopher.

The whole effort of the Logic is directed at shaking off the immediacy of its beginning, and at incorporating within the explicit content of the Idea all the unofficial comments made along the way by the philosopher. It would be wrong, however, to take lightly either the immediacy with which logical reflection is affected or the presence (albeit unofficial) of the philosopher. The two provide the link between thought and reality, which is at issue in the system. I should indicate that I am assuming at this point a crucial position with regard to the Hegelian system. Hegel's Logic is a moment in the experience of an individual (the philosopher) engaged in history and nature. It is not a thought construction that, starting from a priori principles, should rejoin a concrete set of experiences that stand outside of it. In fact, Hegel's Logic has hardly anything in common with the transcendental logic of Kant or the constructions of either Fichte or Schelling. It is to be understood, rather, as the reenactment in the medium of pure thought of experiences that have already been lived. In the play between immediacy and reflection witnessed in the logical movement, the philosopher should recognize his own effort as a historical individual engaged in overcoming the immediacy of nature. It is only in the Logic that the possibility of his experiences is finally understood. It is important to stress, however, that the Logic operates from the start within the limits of those experiences; it is not intended to comprehend anything else but their possibility. The transition from thought to reality, which Hegel's Logic is supposed to perform, is not as formidable a task as it might appear to be at first—not because Hegel has idealized reality, but because with his Logic he intends only to complete an experience that has begun in the immediate presence of history and nature.

These comments bring us back to the problem of contingency. The immediate is contingent; if the logical movement is affected by immediacy, it follows that it is in some sense contingent. The essential task of the Logic



is to overcome the contingency to which its beginning and its progress are subject. But what does Hegel mean by contingency, and in what sense does one overcome it? This is the question to which we must now turn.

## THE CONCEPT OF CONTINGENCY

The dialectic to be considered falls into the three stages common to the Logic. The first consists of the exposition of the formal meanings of *possibility*, *actuality*, *necessity*, and *contingency*. At this first stage, the four concepts are considered in abstract—only inasmuch as they form a system of related meanings and provide the basis for the thought of an object in general. At the second stage, a distinction is introduced between the object and the categories. The object thus begins to function as a material to which the categories bring particular determinations. In the third and final stage, an attempt is made to overcome the distinction introduced in the second. The meaning of the categories is reformulated to allow them to regain the generality they enjoyed at the first stage, but without losing the concreteness they gained when operating in relation to an assumed content.<sup>13</sup>

I have already commented indirectly on the formal meaning of *actuality* and *possibility*. I have pointed out that the two categories have independent meaning, yet each expressly points to the other for the fulfillment of its own signification. The existence of what is actual should be justifiable, and what is justifiable should be actual. However, it does not necessarily follow that if something is possible it will actually exist. Nor does it follow that if it exists an explanation for its existence can actually be given. At the formal level of analysis, the transition from one category to the other (even though expressly required by both) remains immediate. It must be performed on the strength of considerations extrinsic to the logical play of the categories. Hegel argues that the immediacy is due to the present abstractness of the two categories. Possibility signifies a mere self-reference on the part of an object (a justification only in principle); actuality signifies a mere presence. Neither category characterizes an object concretely enough to reveal just how, by being possible, it must be actual; and by being actual, possible. And the abstractness of each is directly related to the abstractness of the other.<sup>14</sup> It is because the possibility of an object is a mere possibility that the object will appear only as a "possible" ("*nur ein Mögliches*")—the sort of actual, in other words, that might as well not have been. Conversely, it is because an actual is (as Hegel puts it) an immediate first<sup>15</sup> (i.e., something merely present and still open to determination) that the possibility it establishes remains formal.

The first result, therefore, of the dialectic of actuality and possibility is an

ambiguity regarding the character of the object that the two categories signify and that they are both expected to determine. The object is neither quite actual yet nor possible; it is at once actual and possible, precisely because it is neither of them determinedly. This ambiguity is expressed by Hegel with the category of contingency: "The unity of possibility and actuality is contingency."<sup>16</sup>

It is in passages like this that one can appreciate the distance that separates Hegel's Logic from classical metaphysics. In classical metaphysics, contingency was thought to be the result of a discrepancy between possibility and actuality. Hegel now defines it as the unity (*die Einheit*) of the two. Implied by this move is a radical innovation in the understanding of the nature of possibility, and also of the relationship that thought (which expresses the possibility of reality) has to reality itself. For Hegel, possibility is not a ground that transcends actuality. It is not (if I may borrow a comment from G. R. G. Mure)<sup>17</sup> like a reservoir of yet unrealized being upon which God chooses either to draw or not to draw. It is instead a determination of formal actuality. It is actuality inasmuch as it is expected to result in yet more actuality. And formal possibility is a determination of actuality. It is actuality inasmuch as it is still open to determination. For Hegel, the distinction between actuality and possibility falls exclusively within the limits of phenomenal existence and is a characteristic of its phenomenality. To express the possibility of reality in thought, therefore, does not mean to transcend its immediate appearance (as if there were anything to reality except its appearing), but to give a description in pure thought form of its structure precisely as appearance. The formal play of the categories of possibility and actuality that Hegel has just unfolded must be understood as the conceptual expression of the unrest of phenomena that leave undetermined on their first appearing exactly what form they will finally take.

Hegel proceeds, therefore, to develop the concept of contingency in terms of the ambiguity inherent in all phenomenal existence.<sup>18</sup> A phenomenon, upon its first appearing, cuts itself off from the process that has led up to it. As Hegel puts it, it abstracts from the reflection that establishes its possibility. For this reason ("*insofern sie* [the reflection] *in ihm aufgehoben ist*"), it appears as something that has no ground. Like anything that *de facto* is, it parades itself as self-sufficient. It has its own presence to guarantee for its possibility; it seems to dispense, therefore, with any reference to anything outside of it justifying its existence. It is, simply because it is. However, a simple self-reference is hardly a satisfying justification for the existence of anything. The same abstraction, therefore, that brings out the irrevocability of a phenomenon once it has occurred also detracts from the completeness of its appearance. It bestows upon it the character of something, the reality of which is still in need of developing. The phenomenon is

thus a mere possible that must find its fulfillment in something else (*in Gesetzsein*). This ambiguity inherent in the first appearance of anything—its cutting itself loose from justifying grounds, and yet its need for such grounds—is what the category of contingency signifies.

The ambiguity of phenomenal existence is not, however, altogether unmitigated. After the analysis of the category of contingency, Hegel goes on to argue that anything contingent is in principle something necessary.<sup>19</sup> His argument can be rephrased in this way.<sup>20</sup> The simple self-reference of immediate existence, in spite of the ambiguity that it generates, is nonetheless a real one. However abstract and admittedly insufficient as a principle of explanation, it entails a real distinction within a given event between the event “in itself” and a manifold of determinations that, although belonging to it, cannot be identified with it *tout court*. It also entails a real distinction between the given event and some other possible one. And on the basis of these distinctions, one can begin to relate one determination to another, and the event to yet another event, and obtain thereby a more satisfactory explanation for the presence of the original event than any previous appeal to its mere self-reference. The immediate presence of the event on its first appearing can thus be developed into an explanatory system—a system of explanatory references such as the category of necessity signifies.

Hegel's first explicit statement, therefore, on the nature of contingency and necessity is that both follow with equal strength from the interplay of formal actuality and possibility.<sup>21</sup> Contingency is the result of the abstractness of the two categories, which makes their determination of an object a mere adumbration—the first sketch for an object rather than a concrete determination. Contingency, however, does not stand exclusively for irrationality. The ambiguity with which it is synonymous is such that all the elements are already present in it for the development of an explanatory system. *Contingency is the matrix out of which necessity arises*. As developed so far, possibility and actuality establish the possibility for the determination of an object in general. The system of thought that they define ensures that, upon being given, an object will have some explanation for its being. But they leave unspecified exactly what form such an explanation will have to take. The system still fails to yield the idea of an actual world.

The task that Hegel must face next is to remedy the abstractness of the formal play of categories. This he does in the second stage of the dialectic by introducing the notion of a material content to which the formal categories of actuality and possibility are applied. In being thus related to it, the two categories are expected to be concretized and finally to yield the idea of an individually recognizable world.

I will call your attention to this material content again later in the paper.

Right now I only want to bring out the function that it plays in the new stage of the dialectic that follows. Hegel subsumes its notion under the general rubric of actuality. Since the content is something merely present, it is something actual. However, as applied to it, "actuality" carries explicitly the extra note of "indifference to determinations." It means a manifold of existents, each indifferent to the presence of any other.<sup>22</sup> The formal categories of actuality and possibility are now expected to introduce within it the first determinations. And they, in turn, will become real to the extent that they discharge their determining function.

First, what do possibility and actuality come to mean when they are referred to a manifold of existents and become real possibility and real actuality? In the transition, the two concepts must retain all the notes included in their formal signification: actuality—the immediate presence of an object that is nonetheless referred to a process of mediation; and possibility—the reflection of a thing upon itself (its lack of contradiction), which should yield actual presence. Yet they must also be so modified as to function effectively as the determining principles of a given content.

Hegel introduces two new concepts that he believes will fill the bill. One is the notion of a "power to effect," with which he replaces the formal category of actuality; the other is the notion of "circumstance," with which he replaces the former possibility.<sup>23</sup> These two new concepts, although still signifying actuality and possibility, add to them connotations that the previous two failed to convey on their own. A power to effect is something actual—but with an actuality that can be measured by given results. And a circumstance is a source of possibility—but one immediately related to a particular situation.

What is the nature of the relationship that obtains between possibility and actuality thus reinterpreted? The crucial question is whether the new relationship can avoid the ambiguity of the previous formal one. Hegel proposes two formulations for it. According to the first, the relation is one of "identity of content."<sup>24</sup> The same manifold of existents that can serve as manifestation of a power (i.e., as real actuality) can also be determined as a set of conditions and circumstances that occasion certain events to take place (i.e., as real possibility). It is clear, however, that material identity cannot suffice as an exhaustive determination of the relationship, for it abstracts altogether from the distinction between the two notions it is supposed to relate. When we say that a given manifold can be determined either as something already actual or as a possibility for things to come, we introduce the alternative by reverting back to the formal level of signification. It is to the formal distinction that we appeal. And the same element of indefiniteness present at the formal level makes its appearance again. Insofar as the

material content of either one of the two notions is concerned, it is a matter of indifference which side of the distinction is made to apply. The choice remains subjective.

With the second formulation, Hegel tries to introduce the distinction within the manifold of existents and to free it in this way of its formality. He appeals to the notion of a situation in which all the conditions and circumstances are present that fully determine the coming to be of a certain event. Apparently Hegel has in mind the case of a process that is so far advanced as to have become irreversible. And its results, therefore, although not actually present, are already irrevocably committed to existence.<sup>25</sup> The determination of a process that has reached such a stage of development would call for the concepts of both possibility and actuality. The process itself would constitute the real possibility for certain events to take place. However, since the process is so complete that its reality is virtually equivalent to the presence of the event or events it is supposed to usher in, it can also be determined as real actuality. Moreover, the process needs both concepts for its determination. It retains, therefore, a distinction between the two. But again, it retains it only in a relative sense. As real possibility, the process is taken precisely as ushering in something actual; as something actual, it is taken as immediately resulting from a possibility. Hegel, in other words, tries to concretize the formal interplay of possibility and actuality by reinterpreting it as the moment of tension in the transition from an antecedent cause to a subsequent effect, when the effect has not yet acquired full independence vis-à-vis its cause, and precisely for this reason its whole reality consists in its being related to a cause. And the cause, for its part, is also totally defined by its effort to achieve an effect. The two terms (*cause* and *effect*) are indeed distinct. But they are significantly distinct precisely because the reality of each is exhausted by its relation to the other; apart from the distinction, they would disappear.

There is nothing formal, therefore, about the necessity that binds the two terms. In a situation such as we have just defined, real possibility is already equivalent to real necessity.<sup>26</sup> When the possibility is at hand, the actuality that it determines must come to be. Any hesitation as to which term should be given primacy of determination—whether actuality determines possibility or contrariwise—is strictly academic. The one significant reality is the emergence of an event as process, not the abstract determinations under which the event can be subsumed either before or after its advent.

Yet even real necessity does not remain unaffected by contingency.<sup>27</sup> Hegel has easy play showing how the latter makes its appearance again. We must remember that real necessity is conditioned by the presupposition of a manifold of existents that lacks per se all limits. And although it is true that the notion of dynamic tension between power and its manifestations intro-

duces a form that affects it intrinsically, the structure that is thus realized does not extend beyond limits that are still accidental. The amorphousness of the manifold is not absorbed by form; its indifference is not dissolved in dynamic tension. The material content still persists as a general matrix in which the coincidence of form and content occurs only sporadically. Outside the immediate limits of any such occurrence, the manifold remains an aggregate of material elements that might have been or might yet be actual cause or effect, but that are per se neither cause nor effect. The determinations of actuality and possibility apply to them only formally.

Real necessity is equivalent, therefore, to an indefinite series of events—none of which counts as ultimate limit. The “reality” of any of them is recognizable only on the strength of an abstraction—only on condition that an observer limit his field of observation to a given situation, and consider it as if it were a complete world. Hegel argues that real necessity is essentially relative. It is predicated only on the assumption of a situation, the presence and limits of which remain in point of fact contingent.

The situation, therefore, at the end of the second stage of the dialectic of actuality and possibility stands as follows: The formal categories of actuality and possibility have provided the limits within which any object can be determined in principle. They have provided the basis for a system. However, the question remains: Exactly which world (in terms of individual, actual objects) is the system they establish an expression of? In the first stage of the dialectic, in other words, the possibility of determinateness in general has been established—not of individual determinations. In the second stage, on the other hand, the real categories of actuality and possibility have indeed provided the basis for the conceptual determination of individually recognizable objects, but only on condition that the latter be taken as single events that never quite amount in actual fact to a complete world. At the end of the second stage of the dialectic, we are faced by the unhappy choice between a world that is complete as world but must remain only a possibility and an indefinite number of situations that are recognizably real but do not necessarily belong to a world we recognize the possibility of.

Contingency erupts, therefore, at every level and in every respect of the dialectic. The world of which the formal categories are the expression is such that no distinction within it has more than a merely momentary (i.e., strictly relative) significance. The structure for which the real categories provide the schema admit of sharpness of detail only on condition that the background be blocked out. In either case, the connection between any category and the reality it intends to define remains indeterminate and requires for its completion the intervention of a subject (the philosopher doing the Logic) whose relation to the categories remains in turn also accidental. Translated into the language of the *Phenomenology*, the play of



logical notes we have just witnessed would correspond to the busy work of a consciousness that believes itself to have grasped the essence of reality simply because it has developed a system of concepts that exhaust among themselves all the possibilities of being. The consciousness alternates between formally applying the concepts in question to every object at hand and being concerned with the detailed mechanism of certain situations. And when challenged to produce concrete results from its theory, the consciousness would point to the single situations it has analyzed. Upon being further challenged to show how its particular explanations amount to a complete theory, it would point back to the formal system—without realizing that the system and the particular explanations belong to different orders of reflection and that the actual connection between the two is due to its own subjective contribution.

Of course to an enlightened observer, it is clear that abstract theory and detailed analysis of situations do in some sense coincide. The same applies for the philosopher doing the Logic. To him it is clear that the first and second stages of the dialectic have a common intention. But its true nature is first made explicit only in the category of absolute necessity, which Hegel introduces in the third stage. And, as we shall now see, it is quite different from anything that a consciousness that simply operates with the modal categories without bothering to trace their logical origin might expect.

## ABSOLUTE NECESSITY

The move with which Hegel rids the logical process of its contingency is so simple that it runs the risk of going unnoticed. Hegel's claim is simply this: Ultimately, reality needs nothing else but itself in order to account for its own presence. To conceive it absolutely, therefore, means to define it precisely as a presence that constantly reasserts itself. The immediacy that affects our experience of it should not be looked upon as detracting from rationality, but as providing for it the limit that alone makes it possible. Reality is the immediate presupposition (*Voraussetzung*) from which all our reasoning must start and which, upon returning to it as the result (*Gesetzsein*) of a reasoning process (*setzen*), will appear precisely as that which necessitated our presupposing it (*gesetzt als vorausgesetzt*).<sup>28</sup> Or again, reality would not be conceived absolutely were it not understood both as the source and as the resolution of any problem of determination. Being absolute, it must generate its own irrationality—the need for explanation. The ultimate test of any system of thought is not whether it dispels irrationality, but whether it shows that irrationality is contained within reality itself.

In actual fact, therefore, by the end of the first stage of the dialectic of

actuality and possibility, the point has already been made that the relation that holds between the two categories is a constant source of indetermination because the two categories have defined reality absolutely—not because (as hitherto assumed) they still fall short of a true system of thought. Still needed, before the point is accepted as official doctrine, is only a change in expectation as to what it means to determine reality absolutely. It does not mean to enumerate exhaustively the ready-made qualities that supposedly make up its content, but to define it precisely as generating its own problems of determination. It means to define the terms of the general problem of determining it and to establish, therefore, the limits within which any particular problem of determination must remain in order to be a significant problem.

The new awareness of what thought accomplishes in determining the concept of reality is forcefully brought home at the end of the second stage of the dialectic. At that point, the frustration that the philosopher doing the Logic can envisage as following upon the endless process of overcoming the contingency that reasserts itself at the end of any process of explanation forces a change in expectations. It leads to the realization that the contingency does not derive from factors extrinsic to whatever line of necessity has been established. It is instead the result of such a line having been established. As Hegel puts it, the philosopher sees that contingency *becomes* in necessity—that it is the contingency *of* necessity.<sup>29</sup>

The category of absolute necessity that is thereupon introduced proceeds to express reality precisely as generating its own irrationality,<sup>30</sup> as giving rise to contingency as well as necessity:

Absolute necessity is, therefore, the truth into which actuality and possibility as such, and formal and real necessity withdraw. . . . That which is simply necessary only *is* because it *is*: [hence, the contingency] it has neither condition nor ground: but equally it is pure *essence*; its being is simple reflection-into-itself; it is, *because* it is. [Hence, the necessity.]<sup>31</sup>

It does not follow from this definition of *absolute necessity* that Hegel cannot comprehend reality in some ultimate sense. But it is important to realize that any such final comprehension is possible only in the medium of pure thought—i.e., as Logic. The commentators who have seen in Hegel's idealism the most dogmatic of all dogmatic positions have very likely failed to give this point its due weight. I suspect that they all suffer from the same misapprehension, which is also the lot of the busy consciousness we described at the end of the preceding section. They seem to believe (like the busy consciousness) that to explain the occurrence of any single event (be it of nature or of history) is the same as to fill out one more detail in a system of explanatory causes for which the abstract categories of the Logic give a



first outline, leaving no room for any element of indetermination.

In point of fact, Hegel's Logic does not add anything to the content of the knowledge acquired by either the scientist or the historiographer.<sup>32</sup> Its only contribution is the *concept* of the experience gained while acquiring such knowledge—the purely reflective awareness of the nature and the limits of the experience. Essential to the awareness (this is the all-important point) is the realization that the immediacy that affects all experience of reality, far from detracting from its rationality, is in actual fact both its ground and its consequence.<sup>33</sup> The Logic itself is the exhaustive comprehension of reality that it is claimed to be—the system of thought unbroken by any residue of unrationalized content—precisely because in it the true speculative value of immediacy is recognized. In other words, in the Logic Hegel avoids the classical alternative of either denying that contingency is real or merely acknowledging it as a fact that does not admit comprehension. He expresses it as a genuine category of thought and finds the proper place for it in the universal idea of reality.

## REALITY

We are now in a position to understand why Hegel could start the second stage of the dialectic we have been examining (in fact, the second stage of the dialectic in any section of the Logic) with the notion of a content that he claims to derive from the interplay of formal categories just completed in the first stage. The move has at first a certain air of mystification about it. It gives the impression that Hegel is trying to conjure up a material reference out of purely formal considerations by a play of conceptual trickery. Yet all misgivings disappear once we understand exactly what Hegel does at the first stage of every dialectical cycle. He simply defines reality (with varying degrees of explicitness) as the inescapable context within which all problems of determination must fall. But once we have understood reality in this way, we can proceed without further ado to presuppose it as fact and to devise techniques that will bring out the rationality implicit in it. Once we have understood why reality must appear as fact, we have comprehended it absolutely. And there is nothing left for us to do except deal with the problems that its immediacy presents. The point is obvious, but it is not trivial—for losing sight of it might lead to the illusionary belief that thought needs fulfilling (as thought) in a medium other than conceptual or, conversely, to the equally illusionary belief that the fulfillment of thought on reflective terms alone would render superfluous any nonconceptual apprehension of reality.

As the dialectic of actuality and possibility concludes, therefore, the philosopher detects a new order emerging out of the apparent state of disarray into which the logical process had landed itself by the end of the second stage. At that point, the intention of the formal categories (which was to provide a complete determination of reality) seemed checked by the immediacy that erupted from within their play. And the real categories, which were expected to remedy the abstractness of the formal ones, seemed in fact to lose sight of any systematic plan. Now, at the end of the third stage, the singleness of purpose of the logical process reasserts itself. It is clear now that the intention of the formal categories has indeed been realized—but not in the manner one might have expected. It has been realized by the formulation of a complete disjunction (e.g., something is either possible or actual), the terms of which define the limits of any significant problem of determination. As for the real categories, our busy consciousness (to return once more to it) was not altogether misguided when it believed that upon explaining any single event it was fulfilling the intention of the system of thought defined by the formal categories. It only failed to realize how close the connection is between formal and real level of reflection. The latter simply repeats the former. It does not complete it or extend it—as if the formal categories had not already expressed reality in toto. The real categories only elaborate on the special problems of determination that arise granted the definition of reality given at the formal level.

Moreover, the disproportion between the official results of the play of categories and the unofficial comments made by the philosopher regarding their meaning is overcome. The realization is finally made that the determinations that have accrued to thought unexpectedly in spite of its efforts to be pure thought have been the result of its own reflectivity. The immediacy of the determinations were contained within the reflection of thought. In the third book of the *Logic*, therefore, the dialectic folds upon itself. All the previous categories reappear, but modified in order to appear explicitly as the determination of thought. And the immediacy that accompanied their previous appearance is now revealed as the freedom that thought has with regard to itself while determining its own appearances. But in that immediacy one can also recognize the facticity with which reality presents itself to any observer. In one single stroke, therefore, official cognizance is made of the sense in which reality must remain an ultimate presupposition; any alleged opposition between the reflection of thought and the immediacy of being is also removed. As the thought of thought, logical thought is recognized as the thought of reality.<sup>34</sup>

## CONCLUSION

In Chapter 9 of *De Interpretatione* Aristotle calls attention to the case of events, such as a battle at sea, that are contingent up to their occurrence, but that become necessary once they have taken place.<sup>35</sup> Their "having occurred" then becomes an irrevocable fact. Within the context of Aristotelian philosophy, this circumstance leads to the recognition of two different meanings of necessity. There is a necessity that follows upon the rational ordering of the cosmos—e.g., the necessity that accompanies the cyclical movement of the heavenly spheres—and a necessity that follows upon the indeterminateness of matter—i.e., the blind necessity of chance. The two meanings (I must add) are, for Aristotle, quite disparate.

If I were asked to state in a few words the result of the dialectic of actuality and possibility, and also what I believe to be the main thesis developed by Hegel throughout the *Logic*, I would say that Hegel has shown the interdependence of the two meanings of necessity. Both are required in order to conceive reality as a self-contained process. For Hegel reality would not be self-sufficient if it did not contain its own irrationality. The only order it exhibits is one that takes shape out of the contingency of facts and, upon being realized, leads to a renewal of immediacy. The only wisdom possible lies in the recognition that there is no situation too irrational to serve as the basis for a new order, and no degree of order that does not generate its own opposite.

## NOTES

1. Cf. *Differenz des Fichte'schen und Schelling'schen Systems der Philosophie*, in *Jenaer Kritische Schriften*, eds. H. Buchner and O. Pöggeler, pp. 75–76. Also, the interpretation of this passage by H. Kimmerle in *Das Problem der Abgeschlossenheit des Denkens, Hegel-Studien*, Beiheft 8 (Bonn, 1970), pp. 27–28.
2. Kimmerle, *Das Problem der Abgeschlossenheit*, pp. 29–30.
3. See the work of O. Pöggeler on the development of Hegel's thought at Jena; e.g., "Hegels Jenaer Systemkonzeption," *Philosophisches Jahrbuch* 71 (1963–64), pp. 286–318; *Die Komposition der Phänomenologie des Geistes, Hegel-Studien*, Beiheft 3 (Bonn, 1966), pp. 27–74.
4. For a statement of the objection as it has been recently raised again, cf. L. Puntel, *Darstellung, Methode und Struktur, Hegel-Studien*, Beiheft 10 (Bonn, 1973), pp. 15 ff.; note 7a (p. 18) is particularly interesting. The problem that the system of Hegel poses is especially felt in the relationship of the *Phenomenology* to the system. It seems that upon reaching the idea of the system, Hegel in fact withdrew the possibility of an introduction to it such as the *Phenomenology* is supposed to provide. Fulda's book, *Das Problem einer Einleitung in Hegels Wissenschaft der Logik* (Frankfurt, Main: Klostermann, 1975), is dedicated to this problem. For a criticism of his approach to the problem and the conclusions he

- reaches cf. Puntel, *Darstellung, Methode und Struktur*, pp. 308 ff. See also Stanley Rosen, G. W. F. Hegel (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1974).
5. C. L. Reinhold had already raised this objection against the idealism of Fichte and Schelling. Cf. Pöggeler, "Hegels Jenaer Systemkonzeption," pp. 296-97.
  6. Dieter Henrich, "Hegels Theorie über den Zufall," *Kant-Studien* 50 (1958-59). Henrich's article deals with contingency at every level of the system, but only briefly with its meaning in the Logic. The article is admirable. However, it leaves the definite impression that Hegel adds to the position of Kant and Fichte only a better reflective understanding of what that position entails. It is certainly true (as Henrich points out) that "Die Notwendigkeit setzt sich wohl selbst die Bedingungen, aber sie setzt sie als zufällige . . . Die Notwendigkeit kann gerade deshalb gleichgültig sein dagegen, welche besonderen Dinge an ihr zugrunde gehen, weil schon, ehe sie gesetzt sind, es gewiss ist, dass sie ihr nicht widerstehen können" (p. 135). Necessity is identical with the negative power of reflection, and contingency is its immediate result. It must be added, however, that contingency is the *only content of necessity*. Unless this point is made clear, Hegel's full position is not appreciated. Thus, in Henrich's article it is difficult to see exactly how Hegelian ethics differ from Stoicism. It does not suffice, in order to remedy the abstractness of the Stoic attitude, simply to add a public dimension to the personal virtues of self-control. What must be overcome is the very attitude of indifference to the contingent. The prototype of Hegel's moral ideal must be sought rather in Christian doctrine. In both cases salvation is to be sought in some historical (and contingent) event. For Hegel it is not possible to dispose of sin simply by rendering it indifferent to the plan of salvation. Sin itself must be incorporated within that plan through redemption.
  7. But then, of course, "system" would have to mean something very peculiar. I am inclined to accept the position that the whole *Enzyklopädie* represents only the first of the famous three Hegelian mediations (the logical one) and that the other two would have to be sought in some more historical and empirical science (cf. Puntel, *Darstellung, Methode und Struktur*, pp. 322 ff.). However, when a system becomes so broad and inclusive that its limits are difficult to determine, it ceases being a system. Emil L. Fackenheim has also a very "unsystematic" view of Hegel's system (cf. *The Religious Dimension in Hegel's Thought* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1967), pp. 15-30; 214-15).
  8. WL, II, 169 ff. By "greater Logic" or "Logic" I mean *Wissenschaft der Logik*, and refer to it in the notes as WL in the edition of G. Lasson (Hamburg, 1963; reprinted from the edition of 1934). References to the English translation by A. V. Miller, *Hegel's Science of Logic* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1969) are designated SL. Hegel uses the term "actuality" in two senses: a broader and a narrower one. According to the broader meaning, "actuality" means a process of self-manifestation. If denotes an object, in other words, the only content of which is its own process of manifestation (WL, II, 169: "So als die Manifestation"). One could say that its essence consists in its being present. According to its narrower sense, "actuality" is used by Hegel in contradistinction to "possibility." Together with "possibility" and also "contingency" and "necessity," it then appears as a moment in the dialectic of "actuality" understood in the broader sense. In the present paper, I use "actuality" in the narrower sense alone.
  9. For a detailed analysis of "reflection," "essence," and "show" (*der Schein*), cf. my paper, "Reflection and Contradiction: A Commentary on Some Passages of Hegel's Science of Logic," *Hegel-Studien* 8 (1973), pp. 131-61. Hegel compares

- "actuality" (understood in its broader sense) with earlier categories in WL, II, 169: "Das Sein ist noch nicht wirklich"; SL, 541: "Being is not yet actual."
10. There is no question of the presence in the *Logik* of a dialectic of the subjective *meinen* as in the *Phenomenology*. Cf. H. G. Gadamer, *Hegels Dialektik* (Tübingen: J. G. B. Mohr, 1971), p. 57.
  11. Cf. Dieter Henrich, "Anfang und Methode der Logik," *Hegel-Studien* 1 (1964), p. 28.
  12. Cf. WL, II, 485 ff.
  13. Cf. Hegel's general remarks about the dialectic in WL, II, 494 ff.: "Ganz allgemein aufgefasst"; SL, 834: "Taken quite generally." WL, II, 498: "Näher ist nun das Dritte"; SL, 834: "Now more precisely than the third."
  14. WL, II, 173: "Das Wirkliche als solches ist möglich"; SL, 544: "The actual as such is possible."
  15. WL, II, 173; SL, 544.
  16. WL, II, 173; SL, 545.
  17. *A Study of Hegel's Logic* (Oxford, 1959), p. 136.
  18. WL, II, 174: "Das Zufällige hat also darum"; SL, 545: "The contingent, then, has." WL, II, 173-74: "Das Zufällige bietet daher"; SL, 545: "The contingent therefore presents." I am using "phenomena" and "phenomenal existence" in a rather broad sense not to be confused with the meaning of the category of *Erscheinung*, which Hegel has analyzed and superseded earlier in the *Logic*. By "phenomenon" I mean any event or state of affairs precisely as it occurs or is given. A phenomenon does not make pretense of revealing any reality but its own. In brief, I use the term synonymously with "actuality" in Hegel's broad sense of the category (cf. note 8 above).
  19. WL, II, 174: "Aber darum weil jede unmittelbar in die entgegengesetzte"; SL, 545: "But just because each immediately."
  20. Cf. WL, II, 174-75: "Das Notwendige ist ein *Wirkliches*; so ist es"; "Das Zufällige ist also notwendig"; SL, 545-46: "The necessary is an *actual*; as such it is"; "The contingent, therefore, is necessary."
  21. Cf. WL, II, 174: "Dies *absolute Unruhe* des *Werdens*"; SL, 545: "This *absolute unrest* of the *becoming*."
  22. WL, II, 175: "Aber eine solche, die"; SL, 546: "But one which."
  23. WL, II, 175-76: "Die reale Wirklichkeit *als solches* ist"; "Die formelle Möglichkeit ist die"; SL, 546-47: "Real actuality *as such* is"; "Formal possibility is."
  24. WL, II, 176: "Diese Mannigfaltigkeit des Daseins"; SL, 547: "This existing multiplicity."
  25. WL, II, 178-79: "Was daher real möglich ist, das kann"; SL, 549: "Therefore what is really possible." The whole of WL, II, 178 is relevant (cf. SL, 548-49).
  26. WL, II, 179: "Reale Möglichkeit und die Notwendigkeit sind daher"; SL, 549: "Real possibility and necessity are therefore."
  27. WL, II, 179-80: "Die Relativität der realen Notwendigkeit"; SL, 550: "The relativity of real necessity."
  28. For the play in the Hegelian dialectic between "positing" and "presupposing," see Di Giovanni, "Reflection and Contradiction," especially pp. 148-51.
  29. WL, II, 181: "So enthält die reale"; "Sie ist daher es selbst"; SL, 551: "Thus real necessity"; "It is therefore necessity itself."
  30. Hegel points out that the notion is absolute precisely because it contains contingency. WL, II, 248: "Er ist die absolute Macht gerade darum"; SL, 608: "The notion is absolute power."

31. WL, II, 182; SL, 552.
32. For the purely reflective character of the logic, cf. WL, II, 230 ff.: "Indem es zunächst die *Logik*"; 485: "Die absolute Idee selbst hat näher"; SL, 592 ff.: "Since it is primarily logic"; 825: "More exactly the absolute Idea itself." On the nature of the logic and its relation to Hegel's *Realsystem*, I find L. Puntel's recent work very helpful (see note 4 above).
33. Thus, at the end of its reflection upon itself, thought is back to the immediacy with which it began—except that now the nature of the immediacy has been understood. Cf. WL, II, 499: "Dies *Resultat* ist daher die Wahrheit"; SL, 837: "This *result* is therefore the *truth*."
34. Cf. WL, II, 213 ff.
35. 19a, 23–24.



# THE NECESSITY OF CONTINGENCY: AN ANALYSIS OF HEGEL'S CHAPTER ON "ACTUALITY" IN THE *SCIENCE OF LOGIC*

John W. Burbidge

In an article published in 1958, Dieter Henrich wrote: "According to Hegel's theory, contingency itself is necessary without qualification."<sup>1</sup> Henrich's purpose in that paper did not require a detailed examination of Hegel's justification for this claim. Since, however, the strength of the Hegelian philosophy lies not simply in its comprehensive scope but also in the detailed execution whereby each link is finely and carefully articulated, this paper picks up Henrich's point that Hegel establishes the necessity of contingency and explores the way it is defended within the pages of the larger *Science of Logic* by reconstructing the argument in the chapter on "Actuality."<sup>2</sup>

Hegel calls his logic "the system of pure reason"<sup>3</sup> and "the science of the pure Idea, that is, the Idea in the abstract element of thought."<sup>4</sup> It proceeds, free from the specific content of sensible intuition and experience. Indeed, its intellectual activity probes beyond the representations and ideas that are but indirect generalizations from experience, either arbitrarily universal or concretely expressed in metaphor and illustration. The content of the logic is that which is present when pure thought simply thinks concepts and categories apart from their application and use. To become a science, and hence an ordered discipline, however, thought must also articulate the relations between concepts with precision and clarity. It cannot, in its turn, proceed by means of arbitrary intuition or insightful analogy. For Hegel it employs the reflective procedures of thought: (1) the careful understanding

of precise, positive characteristics; (2) reflection on dialectical implications of that precision; and (3) explanation that integrates these specific contrary terms into a speculative, inclusive unity.<sup>5</sup> These three logical procedures—understanding, dialectical, and speculative reason—provide the schematic structure of our analysis.

#### A. "CONTINGENCY, OR FORMAL ACTUALITY, POSSIBILITY, AND NECESSITY"

As a first step in exploring the necessity of contingency, we must understand clearly what contingency means. "The contingent," writes Hegel, "is an actual which is determined at the same time only as possible—whose other, or opposite is just as [possible]."<sup>6</sup> In this statement are included two words that are themselves highly ambiguous in ordinary usage: *actual* and *possible*. To understand precisely what is involved in contingency, then, these concepts must be clarified in turn.

1.<sup>7</sup> When thought first considers the concept of actuality, it is taken to be synonymous with being or existence. "What is actual" seems to be similar to the expressions "what is" and "what exists." But careful reflection leads to more precise discriminations. In the first place, "what is" is more abstract than either of the other two expressions; in the second place, the existence of an entity is distinguished from its essence, whereas actual incorporates the sense of actualizing the essence. That essence, capable of being actualized, is more precisely thought of as the possibility of the actual. The actual actualizes the possible, specifies its difference from the apparently synonymous terms *being* and existence. Reflective thought, then, must consider the meaning of possibility to complete its understanding of actuality.

2.<sup>8</sup> The possible is the ground of the actual. As ground, however, it is not simply other than the actual, for it is, implicitly, what the actual is explicitly. This identity of the implicit and the explicit defines the positive sense of possibility, and its distinction from the actual provides its negative determination.

<sup>9</sup> There are, then, two distinct sides to the meaning of possibility. On the one hand it is intrinsically related to, but other than, the actual and not positively definable on its own. On the other hand, it has the positive sense of being the self-identity of the actual. The actual is possible because it does not contradict itself. Compared to the simple and immediate sense of actuality with which we began, this double sense of possibility is complex and dialectical. Reflection must explore how the two distinct senses are related.

<sup>10</sup> We take the positive sense first. What is possible is self-identical. In other words, everything is possible that does not contradict itself. The



universality of that statement, however, poses problems. For the term *everything* includes within its range all distinct possibilities, some of which will contradict others. Therefore there is a sense in which *everything*—stressing the potential universality of *every*—is not possible.

<sup>11</sup>This paradox becomes explicit when thought does not think about possibility in general, but about a specific possible. If something, let us say A, is possible, then according to the positive meaning of the term, A is self-identical, or  $A = A$ . But according to that same definition, the opposite, or contrary, of A is also possible, since what is not A is what is not A ( $-A = -A$ ).

Although either A or  $-A$  is thus possible, both cannot be possible, since (A and  $-A$ ) is a contradiction and not self-identical. At this point the second aspect of possibility appears, since it is not possible for both possibles to become actual.

<sup>12</sup>Reflection finds that it is faced with an intriguing dialectic. It began thinking of possibility as the ground of the actual—what the actual actualizes. In its positive sense, however, the possible is what is self-identical. Reflection on the latter has shown that it is no longer possible to claim that the actual is simply the possible actualized. A distinction has been introduced between possibles that have been actualized and those that have not. Thought must now explain speculatively the significance of this new sense of actuality.

3.<sup>13</sup> The actual is still intrinsically possible. The immediate identity remains. But the possible is only possible and is not inevitably actualized. Therefore the actual, as now thought, is not simply the possible, but only one possible of many. This complex reflection, which includes possibility as only possible, transcends and cancels the original sense of the actual. Indeed, since that original immediate sense did not distinguish between possibles, it is now evident that it did not do justice to the more inclusive sense of actuality now developed. As the simple identity of actuality and possibility, it was only a possibility itself.

<sup>14</sup>But this implies in turn that possibilities are actual. Surely they are not really actual, or absolutely and completely actual. The sense is rather the original one in which actuality can barely be distinguished from the vague generality of being or the universality of simple existence. Possibilities are immediately present to thought. In this sense, all possibilities are, have existence, and are actual.

<sup>15</sup>On the other hand, the more developed sense of actual, as that which actualizes one of several possibilities, brings us to the definition of contingent with which we began. You will recall, the contingent is an actual that is determined at the same time only as possible—whose other, or opposite, is just as possible. From our review we can now see that by actual we mean

an existing actual that has actualized one possibility out of many. The other term, *possible*, means simply that which is self-identical and can be thought without contradiction. That one particular possibility becomes actual is not the inevitable result of its possibility, but is itself contingent.

<sup>16</sup>What are the implications of this definition of contingent? In the first place, there is no reason or ground why the contingent actual, rather than its opposite, was actualized. Whatever ground it has is simply its own actuality. To this extent it is groundless. Similarly, the range of self-identical possibilities is indifferent to its multiplicity and implicit contradictions. There is nothing within any particular possible that can explain the actuals that do result. They too lack any inherent ground or justification. Therefore, within the meaning of contingency, both the actual and the possible are groundless.

<sup>17</sup>But this is not the total picture. For that which specifically defines the actual is that which actualizes the possible. The two terms are used in the definition of contingency because the actual is, in some sense, grounded in the possible. Similarly the possible is thought of as self-identical because it is implicitly what the actual is explicitly. Its meaning is grounded in the actual. Thus the term *contingency* also includes within its meaning the mutual grounding of the actual in the possible and the possible in the actual.

<sup>18</sup>In other words, analysis of the meaning of contingency gives the paradoxical conclusion that, as contingent, it lacks a ground and, as contingent, it is grounded.

<sup>19</sup>In thinking through this contradiction implicit in the term *contingency*, thought finds itself moving from moment to moment with a restless somersaulting of meanings. Four stages can be distinguished:<sup>20</sup> (1) The contingent actual is thought of as immediately one with its possibility—with what it is in itself. It is simple existence without a ground. Yet lacking a ground that it actualizes, it loses the distinctive sense of actual. It is simply possible. (2) The actual is thought of as distinct from the possible that is its ground. But the possible is not sufficient to ground its actuality as contingent, since as actual it is only one of a number of possibles. (3) The possible is thought in its simple, positive sense of self-identity. But as such it does have actuality in the universal sense of “that which is.” It is immediately actual. (4) The possible, thought of as distinct from and reflectively derived from the actual, lacks actuality. But even so it has a bare existence that is not reflectively constituted. Again it is immediately actual.

<sup>21</sup>In the concept of contingency, actuality and possibility are each taken, first in their immediate positive sense and second as distinct from its contrary. But none of these four senses remains where it began; it converts into its opposite. This total conversion of senses is the result when thought endeavors to render clear the concept of contingency.

Yet that concept incorporates all these aspects. Reflection on this complex identity leads to a strange implication: An actuality that is the same as its possibility, and a possibility that is nothing other than actual, are necessary. When the process of transition from one meaning into another is collapsed into a simple unity, contingency is no longer the appropriate term.

<sup>22</sup>This curious consequence needs to be justified. What is necessary is an actual that both is immediately present and needs no further justification. Since the actualization of one possibility excludes its opposite from being actualized, the latter is thereby rendered impossible. But that whose opposite is not possible is necessary. As actual, then, the necessary is immediate and not grounded in something else, yet it *is* grounded in its own intrinsic possibility, since its opposite is impossible. In this sense, the necessary is an actual that is intrinsically its own possibility; it thus lacks a ground while being grounded in that possibility. And its possibility is simply its own actuality, even though it is thought as possible through reflection on that actuality. The complex of meanings that resulted from careful analysis of the meaning of contingency turns out to be identical with this formal sense of necessity as that whose opposite is not possible. In the meaning of contingency, the various moments are left distinct and are not thought together. In the meaning of necessity they are explicitly united, and the distinctions are left implicit. In this sense, then, the contingent is the same as the necessary.

We would seem to have reached the goal of our quest. The meaning of contingency, when thoroughly explored, is shown to be identical with the meaning of necessity. Therefore what is contingent is necessary. But the subject of that sentence ("what is contingent") refers to the meaning as relationship of moments: the predicate ("is necessary") refers to the meaning as unity.

A moment's reflection will lead to dissatisfaction with that result. We have defined necessity in a purely formal sense as the reflective impossibility of the opposite of any given actuality. It is the unity of possibility as ground and of actuality as groundless. But these two terms have been equally formal and independent of content. The actual is simply what is, and the possible is simply self-identity. These are not the only senses of these terms, and therefore the result is a somewhat specious victory. The necessity of contingency as yet established would lead to no more than the concession that whatever is actual is necessary, since what is actual cannot be otherwise. Although this sense of necessity was used in the argument for fatalism developed by the Megarians, it does not cover the sense of necessity that is more common in the contemporary world. However, Hegel himself recognizes this consequence. And by recognizing it, he takes us further in exploring what the necessity of contingency means.

## B. "RELATIVE NECESSITY, OR REAL ACTUALITY, POSSIBILITY, AND NECESSITY"

1.<sup>23</sup> In fact, we have already begun the further development of his argument. As we have seen, the formally necessary is a contingent actual. But it is not an actual as simple being or bare existence. It is an actual determined to be one self-identical possible that thereby excludes others. In contrast to the earlier, prereflective sense of actual, this includes those precise determinations that have resulted from reflection. As determinate, it is thought of as real. Understanding must now render precise this more developed sense of actual.

<sup>24</sup>The real actual is a thing with many determinate properties. But the term *actual* is not simply equivalent to the thing as distinct from its properties, nor to existence as distinct from appearance. It has, in addition, the sense of activity, of actualizing through its own inherent dynamic what it is in itself.

2.<sup>25</sup> As we have seen in the previous section, that which is actualized is the possible. However, when we look for that which makes possible real actuals we are not satisfied with the formal definition of self-identity. Instead, the possibility of an actual is the dynamic ground, "pregnant with content," out of which the specific characteristics are actualized. In other words, it is real possibility in both senses of the phrase: It is real *possibility* as that which has the likelihood of becoming actual; and it is *real* possibility as the full range of actual conditions that are sufficient to generate that which they condition. Reflective thought once again becomes dialectical as it explores the tension between these two senses.

<sup>26</sup>Real possibilities are actual conditions. Each one is an actuality as well as a possibility. But the identity is an identity of content—of the particular determination thus characterized. After all, it is not the possibility of its own actuality. It is a possible only through its relation, as ground, to another actuality. Reflection has exposed this relation to the actuality toward which it is directed. On the other hand, for reflection to determine the real possibility of some actuality, it must discover not simply one, but the totality of actual conditions on the basis of which all the determinations of that real actuality are actualized. If all the conditions are not present, the actual is not possible. A diverse multitude of actualities are put together under real possibility. That specific integration is thought as one only because of an actuality that is distinct from any one of those integrated conditions.

<sup>27</sup>The concept of real possibility is a highly complex concept, requiring a more thorough dialectical analysis. On the one hand, since the content is an actual in one respect, and a possible in another, the sense of possible is

purely formal—it is that which does not contradict itself. On the other hand, as the totality of conditions for one actuality, it must be such that these conditions can be integrated without contradiction. Both formally and with respect to specific determinations it is that which does not contradict itself.

Further considerations, however, complicate the picture. Reflection on the multiplicity inherent in real possibility formally distinguishes the different conditions. Each condition, as self-identical and immediately actual, is distinct from the others. As such it stands over against the others. But this means that it is contradictory to say that together they are the one possibility. Using the purely formal sense of possibility as self-identical, it is not possible for a variety of different conditions to be one. This strange conclusion follows not only from formal considerations, but also from material considerations of real possibility as totality of conditions. A set of conditions is called the real possibility of an actual because, when brought together, the multiplicity will be cancelled, and indeed collapse, as possibility. It cannot maintain itself as many. In other words, it is not possible for all the conditions to be integrated as a totality and still be simply possible. For when all the conditions of something are present, it becomes actual. Indeed, the actuality as a thing with many properties is itself nothing else but this integration of the conditions.

On the one hand, a set of conditions is not the real possibility of a thing unless all the conditions are present. On the other hand, when all the conditions are present, the thing is no longer simply possible, but actual.

Indeed, the paradox is even stronger than this. Real possibility is that which, to be possible, contradicts itself neither formally nor materially. Yet real possibility can be a simple self-identity neither formally nor materially.

Reflection on real possibility shows that it is not possible to be both a real possibility of an actuality and distinct from that actuality as possibility.

<sup>28</sup>When we recall all the steps through which we have moved in explicating real possibility, we discover a double process of canceling. In the first place, the immediate actuality of the possible is canceled as significant, and it is seen primarily as the possibility of another—as what that other is in itself. But in the second place we have now seen that its character as possible cannot be maintained. At the very point where it is really possible as the condition for another, it ceases to be possibility and becomes the resultant actuality. Its possibility is canceled in turn. And the resultant actuality is the immediate being of real possibility.

The result of our dialectical reflection is that it has become impossible to distinguish possibility and actuality. In the earlier discussion, where possibility was simple self-identity, the opposite of what was actual was also possible. Here, however, once all the conditions that make a thing possible



are present, nothing else is possible. The actuality of these conditions is simply their actuality as conditions. But that actuality of the possible cannot now be distinguished from what is actualized *by* the possible.

When reflective thought turned to that possibility which is the ground of real actuality, it began by distinguishing the one from the other. But in the last analysis, having worked through all the dialectical implications, it can no longer draw any clear distinctions at all. Simply as one condition among many, something cannot be a real possibility at all. As the totality of conditions, it can only arbitrarily be distinguished from what was to be grounded. Thought reaches the conclusion that the distinctions between real possibility and real actuality can no longer be maintained. They have become integrated into a complex unity that must now have its positive, speculative sense explained.

3.<sup>29</sup> What is really possible in any complete sense must be actual. As that possibility which can do nothing else but become actual, it is necessity. This sense of necessity is different from the earlier, formal one. There we saw that the contingent actuality that is both grounded and groundless is other than formal possibility *per se*. Here, however, real possibility is itself the necessity. "Under these conditions and circumstances," we say, "nothing else can follow."<sup>30</sup> The distinction between real possibility and necessity is only apparent. When we say that something is really necessary, we include in that necessity all the content that constitutes and characterizes that something—that content which was originally included in the determinate sense of real possibility.

<sup>31</sup>Real necessity is relative. It is based on a presupposition that is itself contingent. By this Hegel is not simply making the obvious point that our reflection on the implication of the meaning of contingency has led us to this sense of real necessity, so that the former is the premise for the reflective procedure. Rather it is implicit in the content of the discussion itself. We began by reflecting on the meaning of real actuality—immediate, but determinate, reality. Real necessity concerns the relation between real possibility as condition and this real actuality as conditioned. It presupposes, but is indifferent to, the specific determinations of whatever is so related. On the one hand, such content is the condition of the reflective analysis; on the other, what that content is specifically is irrelevant. Whatever it is, it could have been otherwise. All that is required is that it be a possible content in the simple formal sense of self-identity. As actual, it could have been other than itself. Indeed, it is a contingent matter what content real actuality is given. Given that content, however, reflection will show that it had to be actual because of the total set of conditions.

<sup>32</sup>One cannot think of real necessity, then, without presupposing contingency. The relation is necessary, but the content is contingent. Because

of real possibility A, B must become actual. But the nature of the necessity is contingent on the specific determinations of B.

Not only is the content of the necessary relation contingent, but also the relation itself. The distinction between real possibility and the resultant actual is the result of reflection on that actual. But that reflective distinction is itself contingent and not inevitable. What thought distinguishes as the real possibility of an actual is not itself determined with necessity. In terms of both content and form, real necessity presupposes contingency.

What we have, then, is a unity of necessity and contingency, since contingency is implicit in real necessity insofar as it is determinate, and insofar as it requires, as a necessary condition, the reflective distinction between possibility and actuality.

<sup>33</sup>The speculative explanation of real necessity requires the distinction between real possibility and its actualization, even though this distinction cannot be maintained as absolute. Just as, however, thought moved from contingency to formal necessity by shifting the stress from the implicit relation of explicitly distinct terms to the explicit integration of implicit distinctions, so here reflection can collapse into a unity the moments that constitute real necessity. When thought no longer makes explicit distinctions between real possibility and real actuality, it takes the actual in its totality. Whatever is actual is simply actual, for the reference to a distinct possibility that grounds it is no longer appropriate. What thought now thinks is an actuality that has no external possibility in terms of which it is conditioned. Since there is no other, relative to which it becomes actual, it is absolute actuality.

### C. "ABSOLUTE NECESSITY"

[1]<sup>34</sup> The logical demand to understand precisely drives us further. To advance, however, we must recall our earlier conclusions. In the first section, the contingent, as both grounded and groundless, could not be distinguished from the formally necessary. In the second section, real necessity, in both content and form, is contingently determined. These two moments come together in thought into a contingency that is necessary, and a necessity that is contingent. When these distinctions, however, are integrated into one thought, what results is the total complex of actuality. When we endeavor to understand precisely the ground of this actuality, there is no distinct possibility to which we can turn. This means that it is intrinsically necessary. It is absolutely actual.

[2]<sup>35</sup> Absolute actuality, then, has no possibility that is other than, or distinct from, its actuality. Its ground is its necessity. Yet reflective thought

can still ask the question why? Since it cannot now simply talk of formal self-identity, nor can it distinguish some actual from those others that render it possible, it can only inquire why there is anything at all. The ground that is sought in this question is empty of all content, for all determinate possibilities have collapsed into the absolutely actual. Therefore there is no answer to this reflective question. It is completely contingent that there be anything at all. It could have been absolutely otherwise.

When reflection entertains this possibility, no longer does it think the formal possibility of simple self-identity, nor the real possibility of conditions. It is the possibility that reason entertains when it confronts the actual as necessary and absolute. But such possibilities can either remain a pure possibility with no actualization at all or become the possibility of what is, in fact, actual. There is no reason that it should be one rather than the other.

We are again faced with a dialectical tension. What is absolutely actual is intrinsically necessary, yet it is completely contingent. On the one hand, it is grounded in necessity because there is no distinct possibility to which we can turn. On the other hand, it is grounded in absolute possibility, which is independent of any reference to the actual.

[3]<sup>36</sup> This dialectical contradiction requires resolution and explanation. Since there is no further external point of reference to provide such an explanation, thought must reconsider the earlier argument in light of this new development. The concept of absolute actuality was the result of collapsing the distinctions in the concept of real necessity. The latter distinguished between real possibilities and the resultant actualities. Only on the basis of this distinction does real necessity become possible. Since this distinction was collapsed into the concept of absolute actuality, it is implicit within it. What is thus implicit, but overlooked, in the concept of absolute actuality needs now to be reconsidered. The distinction between possible and actual is reintroduced, not as a relation of contradictory opposites where both cannot be present at the same time, but as a relation of subcontraries whose meanings are distinct and opposite yet explicitly related within a larger universe of discourse. In place of the earlier moves of thought, which first treated the distinctions as explicit and the relations as only implicit, and then shifted to collapsing the distinctions into an explicit unity, we are now in a position where it is necessary to take both the distinctions and the relation as explicit component parts of the meaning of the concept. On the one hand, the two moments of possibility and actuality are explicitly distinguished as the negation of each other; on the other, this negative relation is explicitly negated to reaffirm the unity.

<sup>37</sup>This new content of thought is what is actual, period. No longer do we contrast immediate or formal actuality with reflective considerations on its logical possibility. Nor do we distinguish determinate actuality from its real



conditions. Nor indeed do we think of absolute actuality as simply necessary in itself. We are, instead, thinking of the actual as it is actually. We distinguish actuals that are real possibilities from that which they actualize. Indeed, the determinations that are actually present result from the internal relations by which the distinctions between actual and possible are both constituted as distinct and then related as part to whole. In other words, possibility is established as the opposite of the actual through the reflective determination of distinctions within the actual itself.

This process by which reflection distinguishes the possible from the actual mediates and grounds the actual. It renders the actual possible. The distinction and its resolution actualize and render determinate what the actual is implicitly. It is its possibility in a final and preeminent sense. Instead of thinking about absolute possibilities, explanatory thought considers the mediating process by which the actual determines itself.

<sup>38</sup>Careful consideration shows that the actual, as we are now thinking the term, constitutes itself as determinate by means of the relation in which possibility grounds actuality, and actuality is grounded by possibility. At the same time it generates that relation as the explicit form of its implicit character. As that which constitutes its own ground—as self-constituting—it is absolute necessity. This means, however, that absolute necessity gives rise to contingency as the ground of its own necessity. For it is contingent which moments are distinguished, separated, and repelled from its actuality as its own conditions. Whatever moments are thus rendered determinate, however, it is necessary that they thereby become the means to its absolute self-determination. Without these contingent, determinate moments, it could not be established as necessary. This play of countervailing forces determines the actual to be necessary by annulling, even as it establishes, contingency. It generates, even as it transcends, the repelling moment of contrast and counterthrust. This necessity is necessity absolute. It alone establishes the absolute necessity of contingency.<sup>39</sup>

With that, our assigned task has been accomplished. Contingency itself has been shown to be necessary without qualification.

Necessity as thus defined, however, is blind. There is no reason or purpose for the way in which it determines itself. Only when the meaning of necessity is taken up into the explicitly rational perspective where it is given conceptual meaning will it become the basis of freedom as intentional self-determination. But that is beyond the terms of reference for this paper.

## CONCLUSION

A few comments may be in order about the necessity of Hegel's method. You will recall that, at the beginning of the paper, it was suggested that

Hegel's logic develops through the process of reflective thought: "the careful understanding of precise, positive characteristics; reflection on the dialectical implications of that precision; and explanation, which integrates these specific contrary terms into a speculative, inclusive unity." These procedures took us from the most primitive sense of actuality, through a dialectical reflection on the possible, to the integrating concepts of contingency and necessity. These again became the object of understanding's precision, dialectical reflection, and speculative explanation until the meaning of relative, or real, necessity was reached. Further speculation showed how the previous moments were integrated into the complete sense of necessity absolute.

Wherein lies the necessity of the movement? The answer can be suggested in three stages. In the first place, the concept with which we began, actuality, is a universal concept. It is used to characterize all that is. But as first present in thought it is immediate and indeterminate. In the second place, to render it more determinate without introducing inappropriate considerations, understanding must draw careful and clear distinctions. Such distinctions, however, are partial. When they are considered in themselves, apart from their context, their inherent limitations clash with the universality of that which they were to define. Dialectical reflection explores the various aspects of this clash until the intrinsic relation between defining characteristic and defined concept is reconstituted. This process of reconstitution is rendered necessary by the partiality that results from understanding's precision. Yet the latter was what made the original concept possible. In the third place, then, thought must explore how the various moments interact within the integrated unity: how the original characterization of actuality is rendered possible, and how the possibility in turn constitutes its necessity. Each stage of the process is a necessary moment of its full, determinate development.

This paper is a contingent effort to understand Hegel, which began arbitrarily with the concept of contingency. It cannot pretend to have completed a thorough dialectical reflection on the text. Nor indeed does it explain speculatively the integration between this process of thought and the actual world in which we live—an explanation that would justify the logic as metaphysics. It ends, therefore, with an invitation to reflective dialogue—to explore whether it is, even partially, an adequate understanding of Hegel's text.

## NOTES

1. "Hegels Theorie über den Zufall," *Kantstudien* 50 (1958-59), p. 135, reprinted in *Hegel in der Sicht der neueren Forschung*, ed. I. Fetscher (Darmstadt:

- Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1973), p. 168 n8. Also reprinted in *Hegel im Kontext* by D. Henrich (Frankfurt, Main: Suhrkamp, 1971).
2. Because of the close exegesis of the principal text—the chapter on actuality (*Wirklichkeit*) in Section Three, Book Two, Volume One of the *Logic*—references to that part of the text will be given with the incipit of the passage in the German edition of G. Lasson, *Wissenschaft der Logik* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1966), 2 Bde., reprinted from the 1934 edition, and designated WL with appropriate volume and page number. Following this, reference will be given with incipit to the English translation by A. V. Miller, *Hegel's Science of Logic* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1969), and designated SL with appropriate page number. Finally, reference will be given to the older translation of the same title by W. H. Johnston and L. G. Struthers (London: Allen and Unwin, 1929, 2 vols.) and designated JS with appropriate volume and page number but no incipit. The capital letters A, B, C and the arabic numbers at the beginning of some paragraphs repeat Hegel's own divisions; the bracketed numbers in C, however, are not in Hegel's text.
  3. WL, I, 31.
  4. *Enzyklopädie der Philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse* (1830), eds. F. Nicolai and O. Pöggeler (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1959<sup>6</sup>), §19.
  5. *Ibid.*, §79.
  6. WL, II, 173, my own translation, in which I assume the parallelism of the two subordinate clauses, so that *ebensosehr* repeats *als möglich bestimmt*.
  7. WL, II, 171: "Die Wirklichkeit ist formell"; SL, 542: "Actuality is formal"; JS, II, 174–75.
  8. WL, II, 171: "2. Diese Möglichkeit ist"; SL, 542: "This possibility is"; JS, II, 175.
  9. WL, II, 171: "Weil aber die Bestimmung"; SL, 543: "But because the determination"; JS, II, 175.
  10. WL, II, 171: "Nach der ersten"; SL, 543: "According to the first"; JS, II, 175.
  11. WL, II, 171–72: "Die bloss formelle," "Das mögliche enthält," "Zunächst drückt sich"; SL, 543–44: "This merely formal," "The possible, however, contains," "This is expressed first"; JS, II, 175–76.
  12. WL, II, 173: "Als diese Beziehung"; SL, 544: "But this relation"; JS, II, 176.
  13. WL, II, 173: "3. Diese Wirklichkeit ist nicht"; SL, 544: "3. This actuality is not"; JS, II, 176–77.
  14. WL, II, 173: "Hiermit ist zugleich"; SL, 544: "Here at the same time"; JS, II, 177.
  15. WL, II, 173: "Diese Einheit der Möglichkeit"; SL, 545: "This unity of possibility"; JS, II, 177.
  16. WL, II, 173–74: "Das Zufällige bietet daher"; SL, 545: "The contingent therefore presents"; JS, II, 177.
  17. WL, II, 174: "Das Zufällige ist aber zweitens"; SL, 545: "But secondly, the contingent"; JS, II, 177.
  18. WL, II, 174: "Das Zufällige hat also"; SL, 545: "The contingent, then, has"; JS, II, 177.
  19. WL, II, 174: "Es ist das gesetzte"; SL, 545: "It is the posited"; JS, II, 177–78.
  20. The four stages are actuality and possibility, each considered as grounded and as groundless.
  21. WL, II, 174: "Diese absolute Unruhe"; SL, 545: "This absolute unrest"; JS, II, 178.

22. WL, II, 174-75: "Das Notwendige ist ein"; SL, 545-46: "The necessary is an"; JS, II, 178.
23. WL, II, 175: "1. Die Notwendigkeit, die"; SL, 546: "1. The necessity which"; JS, II, 178-79.
24. WL, II, 175-76: "Die reale Wirklichkeit *als solche*," "Die reale Wirklichkeit hat nun"; SL, 546-47: "Real actuality *as such*," "Now real actuality likewise has possibility"; JS, II, 179.
25. WL, II, 176: "2. Diese Möglichkeit als das," "Diese reale Möglichkeit ist selbst"; SL, 547: "2. This possibility as the," "This real possibility is itself"; JS, II, 179.
26. WL, II, 176-77: "Diese Mannigfaltigkeit des Daseins"; SL, 547: "This existing multiplicity"; JS, II, 179-80.
27. WL, II, 177: "Was real möglich ist"; SL, 547-48: "What is really possible"; JS, II, 180-81.
28. WL, II, 178: "In der sich aufhebenden"; SL, 548-49: "Now in self-sublating"; JS, II, 181.
29. WL, II, 178-79: "3. Die *Negation* der realen," "Was notwendig ist"; SL, 549: "The *negation* of real," "What is necessary"; JS, II, 181-82.
30. WL, II, 179.
31. WL, II, 179-80: "Diese Notwendigkeit aber," "Die Relativität der realen"; SL, 549-50: "But this necessity," "The relativity of real"; JS, II, 182.
32. WL, II, 180: "In der Tat ist somit"; SL, 550: "Thus in point of fact"; JS, II, 182-83.
33. WL, II, 180: "An sich ist also"; SL, 550: "Here, therefore, the unity"; JS, II, 183.
34. WL, II, 180: "Die reale Notwendigkeit," "Diese Bestimmtheit aber"; SL, 550: "Real necessity is," "But this determinateness"; JS, II, 183.
35. WL, II, 180-81: "Aber damit ist diese"; SL, 550-51: "But because this"; JS, II, 183.
36. WL, II, 181: "So enthält die reale"; SL, 551: "Thus real necessity not only"; JS, II, 183-84.
37. WL, II, 181: "Eben darin aber ist"; SL, 551: "But it is in this very act"; JS, II, 184.
38. WL, II, 181-82: "So hat die Form"; SL, 551-52: "Thus form in its realization"; JS, II, 184.
39. WL, II, 183: "Die absolute Notwendigkeit ist daher *blind*," "Aber diese *Zufälligkeit*"; SL, 552-53: "Absolute necessity is therefore *blind*," "But this *contingency* is"; JS, II, 185.

# ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL INTEGRATION IN HEGEL'S POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

Raymond Plant

In this paper I want to argue that issues of political economy lie at the very center of Hegel's particular concerns as a philosopher and that his general philosophical position so structures and governs his account of political economy that the latter cannot be understood fully or appreciated without taking his general philosophical position into account. In addition, I shall argue that Hegel's interest in problems of political economy can be traced back to his student days in Tübingen, and that an understanding of his development during this period and subsequently shows why political economy had to be for him a dominant intellectual concern. In arguing this thesis I hope to be able to say something briefly about Hegel's views, not just on political economy and its role generally but also on particular concepts drawn from this field—concepts such as need, labor, exchange, public authority, and the state. It is only right that at the very beginning of this paper I should say just how indebted I am to the researches of Professor Paul Chamley in this area, particularly his two articles in *Hegel Studien* for 1965,<sup>1</sup> and also his books *Economie Politique et Philosophie chez Stuart et Hegel* and *Documents relatif à Sir James Stuart*.<sup>2</sup>

## HEGEL'S EARLY VIEWS

The first part of this paper is concerned with the development of Hegel's views on political economy up to 1800, and I assume certain points of view argued more fully in my book, *Hegel*.<sup>3</sup> Having stated my intention to place Hegel's theory of political economy at the center of attention, it has to be admitted that there are definite limits to the feasibility of such an enterprise.

Not only did the mature Hegel hold that truth is the whole, so that an abstracted discussion of political economy would be inadequate, but the young Hegel, too, held an equally daunting view about the intricate interrelationships of social institutions and practices when he argues in his *Theologische Jugendschriften* that: "The spirit of the people, its history, its religion, the level of its political development cannot be treated in isolation either with respect to their mutual influence, or in characterizing each by itself they are woven together into a single bond."<sup>4</sup> The same point would hold true for political economy, and the view is mirrored in the analysis of his development presented here: Issues of religion, history, politics, and economics are closely related in his mind.

In my *Hegel* I argued that Hegel's thought was dominated by two interrelated ideals: the restoration of some sense of wholeness and integrity to the individual personality; and the restructuring of society on a more harmonious, reciprocating basis, that is, to restore some sense of community.<sup>5</sup> A crucial influence here on the formation of these ideals in the mind of Hegel, and indeed the minds of others of Hegel's generation,<sup>6</sup> was a romanticized and idealized picture of the ancient Greek and particularly Athenian polis. In such a society, so it was believed, a real sense of community had been achieved. Social practices and institutions such as religion, morality, and politics were all closely interwoven, thus making the social system homogeneous. The individual citizen was able to develop a roundness and wholeness to his personality by being able to take part personally in all these interwoven social activities, an integrity of the personality that has been denied to modern man. For Hegel, particularly in his early years, Greece was the ideal, and even when his enthusiasm for the Greek model had evaporated somewhat, he still extrapolated from Greek political culture a deep and abiding political conviction about the need for society to recover some sense of the harmony of Greece, albeit in its own and modified way, and to recover something of the sense of human wholeness that had been such a dominant part of Greek culture.<sup>7</sup>

Although Hegel was preoccupied with these ideals relating to both society and the individual during this early period, he does not seem to have been interested in exploring the material and economic conditions that enabled this kind of society to flourish in the ancient world and the changes in the material conditions of life that made such a form of communal life more difficult if not impossible to achieve in the modern world. On the contrary, during the period of his earliest writings in Tübingen (1789-93) Hegel seems to have seen religion as the key to the unified nature of Greek life and religious changes to have been the cause of the baneful structure of modern society. In Hegel's view Greek folk religion had been a unifying institution. It appealed to all the powers of the human mind, to head and heart,<sup>8</sup> to the



cognitive, conative, and affective sides of the personality; whereas modern European religion had become too deeply rationalistic and theological, neglecting the need for religion to nourish the emotions, which Hegel regarded at this time as the springs of moral life.<sup>9</sup> Because folk religion managed to appeal to the whole man, it encouraged a sense of personal wholeness and integration, but in addition it was a powerful force for harmony in society generally. All practices in society had a religious dimension and, as such, there were close connections between them mediated by this religious bond.<sup>10</sup> In its social function Greek folk religion was very different from modern Christianity, the practice of which had become a kind of specialism, reserved for special days of the week, involving specialized ceremonies and liturgical forms, with the result that it had become more and more dislocated from the forms of political life and social and moral relationships. The recapture of a sense of community, and with it the regeneration of modern life, was thus seen by Hegel at this period very much in terms of rediscovering something like Greek folk religion, largely by a fundamental reshaping of Christian beliefs and in particular by a rigorous attempt to demythologize the Gospels in order to exclude all elements of transcendence and positivity.

There is therefore very little in the Tübingen material to suggest that Hegel had an interest in the material conditions of life, which constituted the environment within which forms of communal life could exist. However, there are two places in the Tübingen writings in which issues generally falling under the rubric of political economy are discussed: One deals with needs and labor; the other relates to the communistic tendencies of early Christianity and how these relate to the requirements of modern bourgeois life. The first passage, although long, is worth quoting in full, as Chamley makes quite a good deal of it in his work on Hegel's economic beliefs:

The father of this genius [i.e., Greek society] is Time on which he remains dependent all his life—his mother the polis, the constitution his midwife and religion his wet nurse, who took the five acts into her service to aid in his education—and the music of physical and spiritual motion—an ethereal essence—that is drawn down to earth and held fast by a light bond which resists through a magic spell all attempts to break it for it is completely entwined in his essence. This bond whose main foundations are our needs is woven together from the manifold threads of nature; and because he [the Greek] binds himself to nature more firmly with every new thread, he is far from feeling any constraint that he finds an amplification of his enjoyment, or exclusion of his range of life in this voluntary augmentation, this multiplying variety of threads. . . . The brazen bond of his needs fetters him too to Mother Earth but he worked it over, refined it, beautified it with

feeling and fancy, twining it with roses by the aid of the Graces, so that he could delight in these fetters as his own work, as part of himself.<sup>11</sup>

One might interpret this puzzling passage somewhat as follows: The Greek, like every other man, is tied to the earth by the material conditions of human existence, the central one being the requirement that basic needs be satisfied. However, the form of satisfaction may seem either self-imposed or alien, depending presumably upon the system of labor prevailing. In Greek society the way in which needs were satisfied, i.e., labor, was not seen as a constraint but as part of oneself, and thus labor became in turn the basis of the cultural life of the community. Chamley sees in this passage a clear echo of Hegel's reading of Locke during this period, particularly with the idea present in the passage that man externalizes himself in free labor and finds himself mixed with it and reflected in it.<sup>12</sup> Man binds himself more and more to nature by his multiplying needs and their satisfactions, but these do not appear as a positive constraint so much as an extension and a growing richness of life, unlike in modern life where needs, he says, are "iron fetters and raw." At the same time man's natural environment is still considered benign, it is "mother earth." However, the passage is still very complex and difficult to attach any firm meaning to, but certainly Chamley's reading of the passage is consistent with it.

The other passage, not noted by Chamley, is on page forty-one of the *Theologische Jugendschriften*, and it is interesting because it ties in with Hegel's religious preoccupations at the time. The passage occurs during a general attack on Christianity as inimical to human existence. He argues that many of the moral injunctions of Jesus are in apposition to values that Hegel holds dear: "One also finds many commands of Christianity go against the basic presuppositions of legislation in bourgeois society, the basic propositions of the property owner's right to self defence." What Hegel does not go on to discuss until much later in his life is how such an atomistic-seeming form of social organization can generate forms of solidarity and interrelationship. At this point he does seem to be settled in the position of seeing religious alienation as the basic cause of the fractures in social and personal relationships in the modern world and the reform of religion as a way of recapturing community.<sup>13</sup>

Hegel's writings during the Berne period involve a significant shift in his opinions.<sup>14</sup> In the Tübingen writings he seemed to assume that religion played the determinant role within society, forming its structure, its patterns of personal and social relationships. In Berne, however, Christianity is seen against a background of the social and political changes of the later Roman era. Far from Christianity appearing to have a determining role in the fashioning of social life and personal experiences, it is now seen very



much as a projection of a malaise that has already set in in society, a malaise with political and economic roots. Hegel argues that the military might of Rome had led to the formation of a governing elite who used military power and the riches derived from conquests to maintain themselves in power. This form of economic and political domination led, in Hegel's view, to disastrous social and political consequences. The individual began to feel estranged from the state: "The picture of the State as the product of his own energies disappeared from the citizen's soul. . . . All activity and every purpose now had a bearing on something individual—activity was no longer for the sake of the whole or the ideal."<sup>15</sup> These socioeconomic and political changes had a very profound effect upon religious life. Folk religion could not adapt to this changed situation; it was based upon and mirrored a system of reciprocity and integration. With this breakdown of social integration, folk religion had to disappear.<sup>16</sup> Christianity, with its emphasis upon the privacy of the individual in his personal relationship to a God who transcended the social order, fitted the gap. Christianity arose out of the unhappy consciousness left by the decline of a sense of participation and community in Rome. When men could no longer find fulfillment in the social life of the community they projected their ideals onto either a purely private world or a world beyond the political order, namely the kingdom of heaven. By this period, the Christian religion was for Hegel not so much a cause of human estrangement as a projection or symptom of it. The separation of public and private was not produced by Christianity, making men strangers to human feeling, but rather Christianity encapsulated in a series of images the deep discords present in the Roman world, caused by changes in the economic and social structure of the society.

This move toward a more materialist-based approach to social exploration becomes more pronounced after Hegel's move to Frankfurt, when we begin to see Hegel, under the influence of Sir James Steuart, beginning to reflect more systematically upon the material and economic basis of cultural forms, social values, and social structures. I argue that Hegel derived three major insights from his reading of Sir James Steuart's *Inquiry into the Principles of Political Economy*:<sup>17</sup> first, the beginnings of a philosophy of history that enabled him to take up a far more positive attitude toward the development of modern society; second, the idea that the development of the exchange economy caused an increase in human freedom and self-development, which at the same time yields its own forms of integration; and finally, from Steuart's theory of the statesman, he derived a very distinctive theory about the role of the state vis à vis modern commercial society. Hegel emphatically did not turn his back on his Tübingen ideals of an integrated man in an integrated society; rather, as the result of his researches into political economy, he gradually worked his way toward

seeing in the economic life of modern society the development of new forms of integration and community appropriate for the modern world. These influences are perceptible in his Frankfurt essay, *The Spirit of Christianity and Its Destiny*.

In his *Inquiry* Steuart had postulated a threefold process of development in history from pastoral/nomadic, through agrarian, to modern exchange economics. The change from one to the other he interprets as a result of the necessity to increase the food supply, as a result of the increasing growth of the population caused by the domination of the sexual impulse in human life. Steuart also correlates with these distinct economic formations particular kinds of social structures with different sets of social values.

So long as men remained unaware that the supply of food could be increased by human effort, man depended entirely upon the bounty of nature, consuming and moving on. In such a pre-agrarian society men do not labor, but live in idleness—as such, the society, if such it can be called, is a system of natural liberty. If a man lives off the spontaneous fruits of the earth there can be no inducement to come under any restraint or subordination. This sort of social system could not last very long, in Steuart's view, because of the very definite limit it set to the level of population, and life could only be maintained at subsistence level. The pressure of the population leads to labor in order to augment the food supply by human effort. This marks the transition to an agrarian economy. The effect of agriculture is that each cultivator can produce much more food than he himself requires, and this surplus allows for the population to increase.

However, natural differences in physical strength, ability, and intelligence mean that different levels of surplus are achieved by different men, and those who produce most eventually become the masters of those who produce least. An agrarian economy introduces labor, but replaces a system of natural liberty and independence by a system of servitude and slavery.

On the other hand, the exchange economy is an advance upon the agrarian system out of which it developed because it replaces compulsion by inducement. If wants are multiplied above the level of physical necessities, then once the taste for what Steuart calls "luxuries" is developed, a man has an inducement to produce a surplus through his labor, which he can exchange for luxuries. The developed commercial system is a system of freedom rather than of compulsion and servitude.

Not only this, but the exchange economy unites men into relations of functional dependence. One set of men, the farmers, concentrate upon producing a surplus of foodstuffs, another set, the free hands, a surplus of luxury goods, i.e., goods that go beyond the line of bare necessities. Each group exchanges with the other. Thus society is divided into two mutually dependent classes, having recognized wants. The exchange economy thus

produces a system of freedom and a system of mutual independence. Along with the realization of these values goes the development of urbanization and the political state. Members of commercial society are bound together by a cycle of activities and functions, the creation and expenditure of incomes, the production and consumption of commodities; it is a "tacit general contract from which reciprocal and proportionate services result universally between all who comprise it."

The development of a modern differentiated society is therefore seen by Steuart as a rational development—one that develops human freedom and individuality, but also develops its own forms of solidarity and interrelationship.<sup>18</sup>

This typology of social development is implicit in Hegel's discussion of Jewish history in *The Spirit of Christianity and Its Destiny*. In this essay Hegel clearly shows that he regards the development of modern commercial activity as part of the "fate" of man in the modern world. In the essay Hegel describes the development of Jewish history from *Hirtenleben* (pastoral society) to *Staat*, the political constitution, and in what follows I try to briefly fill in this typology.

Abraham, for Hegel, is the crucial figure in Jewish history. In Hegel's view, Abraham reversed the trend of progressive development in history.<sup>19</sup> Abraham left an urban society, however primitive, in Ur of the Chaldees, and reverted to a nomadic type of existence, trying to free himself from social ties. Throughout his wanderings, in his attempt to reassert the pastoral/nomadic existence. Abraham scorned social ties: "He struggled against his fate which would have offered him a stationary communal life with others."<sup>20</sup> The development of patterns of mutual integration including labor—surely part of what is necessarily involved in the notion of a stationary life—is thus clearly regarded by Hegel as part of the fate of modern man. This kind of simple nomadic existence could not maintain itself, as was revealed in the time of Jacob by the famine, when Jacob and his sons were forced to buy corn from Egypt, which had a highly developed agrarian system. At this point Hegel argues: "The fate against which Abraham and hitherto Jacob also had struggled, that is to say the possession of an abiding dwelling place and attachment to a notion, Jacob finally succumbed. The spirit which led them out of this slavery and then organised them into an independent nation works, and is matured from this point onward in more situations than those in which it appeared."<sup>21</sup> The development of urban life, mutual dependence, and a political culture is thus seen by Hegel to be a part of man's destiny against which the Jewish patriarchs struggled. Abraham sought independence, in Hegel's view, and, as Steuart had shown, independence is a correlate of pastoral societies; but though Abraham may have been independent, he was not *free*, in Hegel's

view, just because of the pressure of material needs in such a truncated economy: "With the Jews, the State of independence was a state of total passivity and total ugliness. Because their independence secured them only food and drink, an indigent existence, it followed that with this independence, with this little all was lost or jeopardised. There was no life left over which they could have enjoyed. This animal existence was not compatible with the more beautiful form of life which freedom would have given them."<sup>22</sup> Abraham was independent, but was not free. Freedom, for Hegel, was always a much more complex value than mere independence and self-maintenance. It became linked with self-realization within a rationally comprehensible social order involving intricate forms of mutual interdependence.<sup>23</sup>

The influence of Steuart is very clear here. A nomadic society of this sort is passive because it does not involve labor; it maintains only a bare level of subsistence; there is nothing left over for the development of individuals or for culture. In addition it seems clear that Steuart's typology is being employed in the essay. The development of modern society with its highly differentiated forms is not an unrelenting process of degeneration, as he had hitherto been prone to see it, but is rather a rational process and in some sense part of the fate or destiny of the modern world. Steuart had shown, at least in principle, that reflection on modern society could reveal that it realized certain values, such as complexity of culture and individual freedom, which could not be realized in less developed forms of life. At the same time the commercial structure of modern society with its system of exchange for mutual advantage throws up new, less direct, but still present forms of social solidarity. Hegel began to hark back to Greece and the homogeneity of Greek society far less and instead to concentrate on the structure of modern society in an attempt to describe the way in which the social, political, and economic practices of modern society themselves embody the conditions within which freedom can be realized and forms of social solidarity appropriate to the changed conditions of the modern world could be achieved. There is a rose to be discerned within the cross of the present; modern society for Hegel comes to embody within itself the seeds of community and mutuality without the sacrifice of personal liberty. There is a unity, a harmony, a totality to be discerned beneath the apparent arbitrary surface of bourgeois life. This developing conviction comes out in another rather abstract way in an essay of this period, "On Love." In this essay it is clear that Hegel has a far more positive attitude toward differentiation and plurality than he had in his earlier essays, which embodied his structures on the severe and unreconciled diremptions of modern life: "the linking of many persons depends upon similarity of need and reveals itself in objects which can be common, in relationships assuming such objects

and then in common striving for then and a common activity and enterprise. A group of similar aims, the whole range of physical need may be the object of limited enterprise and in such an enterprise a like spirit reveals itself and this common spirit delights to make itself manifest."<sup>24</sup> This possibility, that forms of harmony and integration could be developed out of what seem to be forms of differentiation, in this case the striving to satisfy personal physical need, was most likely suggested to Hegel by his reading of Steuart. Indeed, as we shall see, in his future discussion of political economy Hegel was very keen to show how apparently egocentric interests—the ownership of property, the labor of the individual in the satisfaction of his own needs, his use of tools—all of which seem to involve a progressive differentiation of one man from another, also generate new, less immediate, but still perceptible forms of harmony and social solidarity.

Finally, at this point in the argument, I want to say something briefly about Steuart's conception of the "statesman." By "statesman" Steuart means merely the form of government, whatever it happens to be in any particular society. In his *Inquiry* he argues that all economic activity requires the oversight of a statesman, whether it is a representative government overseeing the development of the modern commercial society or the patriarch acting as the leader of a nomadic pastoral society. In a modern commercial society, Steuart suggests, the government is able to mitigate some of the more baneful aspects of the growth of commercial relationships by a policy of control over economic activity:

It is hardly possible suddenly to introduce into the political economy of the state the smallest innovation be it ever so reasonable, nay ever so profitable without making some inconveniences. A room cannot be swept without making a dust and one cannot walk abroad without dirtying one's shoes neither can a machine which abridges the labour of men be introduced all at once into manufacture without throwing very many people into idleness. In treating every question of political economy I constantly suppose a statesman at the head of the government systematically conducting every part of it so as to prevent the vicissitudes of manners and innovations by their immediate effects from hurting any interest in the commonwealth.<sup>25</sup>

This conception of public intervention and control of the pace of economic development favored by Steuart was, broadly speaking, foreign to the laissez-faire views of Adam Smith and others, and indeed his views were very critically received in Britain. It does seem, though, that Steuart was influenced by the work of the Cameralists in Germany, and particularly by Justi.<sup>26</sup> As we shall see, it is possible to interpret Hegel's Jena writings, as well as a good deal of his subsequent work on political economy, as an



attempt to come to a philosophical grasp of the developing relationship between economic activity, the role of the state in the economic sphere, and personal liberty.

Hegel's task, as he saw it in 1800, was rather different from how he had envisaged it ten years previously. No longer was he convinced that the redemption of modern society was to be found in the recapture of something like Greek folk religion; on the contrary, correctly understood, the mechanisms of modern bourgeois society do provide the seeds of their own redemption. Modern commercial society, beneath the surface play of alienation and diremption, does yield institutions, practices, principles, and values that generate forms of social solidarity. These forms are no doubt very different from those of the Greek model, but are more appropriate for the changed circumstances of the modern world. To detect, describe, and comprehend these latent forms of unity within differentiation was a philosophical task. As he says in his essay, *The Difference between Fichte and Schelling's System of Philosophy*, "Bifurcation is the source of the need for philosophy." In this particular case philosophy will attempt to grasp the forces at work in modern society, which can, on reflection, be seen to be working for harmony and integration and produce a transfigured understanding of civil society, the system of needs, the state, and public authority.

## HEGEL'S PHILOSOPHICAL REDESCRIPTION

In this section of the paper I try to illustrate how Hegel attempts this philosophical redescription with particular institutions and practices within the economic sphere. The three examples are labor, tools, and property. In each of these cases Hegel's strategy is just the same; as seen by many economists and political theorists of his day, these three activities and institutions involve an increase in individuality, a growth in the differentiation of one man from another, and an undermining of the intimate bonds of communal life. Hegel endeavors to produce by reflection a dialectical reversal of this conventional picture by showing that although labor, tools, and property may well be seen to have a strongly individualistic dimension, they nonetheless fall within the public domain and are characterized by that integration, which in fact they secure within that domain.

The first text in which this philosophical strategy for dealing with issues in the sphere of political economy becomes clear is in the *Jenenser Realphilosophie*, in which Hegel uses for the first time in any extended way his central thesis about the character of labor: that individual labor undertaken to

satisfy individual needs takes on an intrinsically social and universal dimension in commercial society: "The work of each person in regard to its content is universal labour, seeing the needs of all and also apt to satisfy the needs of an individual: otherwise stated, labour has a value. The labour and property of a single individual are not what they are to him, but what they are to all. The satisfaction of needs is a universal dependence of all particular individuals in their relationship to others. . . . each person though an individual having needs becomes a universal."<sup>27</sup> For Hegel labor is not just an individual activity but inherently social. A man produces not merely to satisfy his own needs but also on a reciprocal basis for others. The satisfaction of all my needs above their basic subsistence level is beyond the power of my own labor and depends upon the production of commodities by others. Labor plays a crucial role in the intricate system of mutual interdependence, which he calls the system of needs. At the same time he clearly argues that labor is central to the growth of individuality, self-consciousness, and self-discipline. The argument here, which has the effect of stressing the differentiating function of labor, is classically put in the *Phenomenology*:

Desire has reserved to itself the pure negating of the object and thereby unalloyed feeling of self. This satisfaction however, just for that reason is itself only a state of evanescence for it lacks objectivity and subsistence. Labour on the other hand is desire restrained and checked, evanescence delayed, in other words labour shapes and fashions the thing. . . . the consciousness that toils and serves accordingly attains by this means the direct apprehension of that independent being as itself. . . . By the fact that the form is objectified, it does not become something other than the consciousness moulding the thing through labour; for just that form is his pure self-existence which therein becomes truly realised.<sup>28</sup>

Labor is therefore crucial to attaining self-consciousness and at the same time seems to sap the bonds of social solidarity just because of its role in the development of an individual's conception of himself as a free and independent being. Hegel therefore clearly recognizes that the development of labor and productive activity increases individuality and self-consciousness. However, he is not willing to draw unremitting individualistic consequences from his recognition of the differentiating role of labor. On the contrary; the satisfaction of an individual's needs requires the labor of others once his needs extend beyond mere subsistence: "Need and labour are thus elevated into universality and this creates in a great nation *an immense system of communality and mutual dependence*."<sup>29</sup> The close-knit *sinnliche Harmonie*<sup>30</sup> of the Greek polis depended upon the fact that the citizens did not labor. The growth of the commercial economy has destroyed this

*sinnliche Harmonie* and replaced it with a unity in difference, a system of functional mutual interdependence, a system of interrelationships that requires a good deal of intellectual effort to grasp and to tease out. In this task, classical political economy has played a decisive role for Hegel because the economist is attempting to find "reconciliation here, to discover in the sphere of needs this show of rationally lying in the thing and effective there."<sup>31</sup> In his account of labor, therefore, Hegel attempts to produce a philosophical redescription of the social relationships engendered by labor and to argue that a recognition of the differentiating role of labor in modern society does not require us to take up an individualistic view of society. Of course, for Hegel, this redescription, which yields a communitarian vision of society even within a recognition of the differentiation engendered in commercial relationships, is not just some kind of consoling fantasy whereby we come to terms with the world by veiling its real nature. Rather, the philosophical description of labor relationships, from both the individual and the social perspectives, cuts far deeper and reflects more faithfully the *real character* of the phenomenon than either individualistic political theory or classical political economy from which such political theory developed. These structures of understanding of social life remain at the level of the understanding that trades in bifurcation, abstraction, and a reductionist account of reality and social relationships. A conceptual grasp of the world as given in philosophy in Hegel's view reflects the true nature of reality just because reality is itself dialectical. To this extent the underpinning of Hegel's claim that his communitarian redescription of social life is not a consoling dream depends upon his arguments about the congruence between thought and the world developed in the various logics.

In his treatment of other facets of commercial society Hegel utilizes the same kind of principles that we have seen at work in his account of labor. One of these facets, the use of tools, is closely bound up with labor, and one can see again how Hegel uses this feature to draw conclusions about the degree of mutuality that exists, often unrecognized, in the heart of production and exchange systems. The invention of a new tool may seem, on the face of it, to require us to acknowledge the free creative vision of the self-conscious individual who created it, and Hegel certainly does not wish to undervalue individual human achievement in the creation of new tools. However, he insists upon two points that are of great importance in seeing how even an activity such as invention has its noncontingent social dimension. First of all, the tool responds to a felt need within the laboring process, and in addition its invention requires a background of inherited skill or expertise.<sup>32</sup> But more than this it is a *tool* only insofar as it encapsulates a help or a solution to a productive problem that is open to anyone with the appropriate skill to take up and utilize. The invention of a tool is not, then, a



private creative activity but has this double-sided social aspect: "Faced with the general level of skill the individual sets himself off from the generality and makes himself more skillful than others, invents more efficient tools. But the really universal element in his particular skill is his invention of something universal; and others acquire it from him and thereby annul his particularity and it [the tool] becomes the common immediate possession of all."<sup>33</sup> Invention therefore requires two sorts of social dimension: (1) a tradition of inherited skill in production against the background of which the tool is invented and (2) its nature as a tool as opposed to any other sort of object requires that it satisfy certain public criteria relating to the productive process within which it is to play a part and, because of this, its use is open to all. These points are nicely summed up in the *Jenenser Realphilosophie I*: "It is that wherein working has its permanence, that alone which remains of the labourer and the substances worked upon in which its contingency is externalised; it is inherited in the traditions while that which desires as well as that which is desired only subsist as individuals and individuals pass away."<sup>34</sup> Tool making and tool using therefore relate to a public domain of inherited skill and wisdom in productive processes, and the invention of tools has to be made intelligible within the background of this type of social cooperation.

My final example of Hegel's attempt to redescribe and put into a more communitarian perspective the central features of commercial society is property. The ownership of property is very closely bound up in Hegel's view with the development of individuality, self-consciousness, and the distinctness of one person from another. It is the way in which the specific and individual character of a person's will is made objective: "personality is that which struggles to lift itself above this restriction and give itself reality, or in other words to claim the external world as its own."<sup>35</sup> Conceived in this way property may be regarded as a decisive differentiating institution within society. But again a dialectical reversal in the argument occurs, which has the result of crediting property with an equally central social dimension. Possession and appropriation are necessary, but not sufficient conditions of property. Property as a *right* has to be recognized. If property is not recognized, then although an object may be appropriated, entitlement to it has not been vindicated. The property has to be recognized as property by those who have been excluded by the act of appropriation. Appropriation may be an individualistic, indeed a possessive individualistic act,<sup>36</sup> but property requires social recognition: "The security of my possession becomes the security of the possession of all: in my property all have their property";<sup>37</sup> and "I hold my property not merely by means of the thing and my subjective will, but also by means of another person's will as well and so hold it in virtue of my participation in a common will."<sup>38</sup>

Property as embodying a claim to entitlement as opposed to a power of appropriation can exist only within a nexus of mutually recognized rights and obligations. In addition, property relationships lead to more concrete interrelationships in contractual situations. A free man must be able to alienate his property, otherwise he would be tied to the particularity of nature. A man needs property in which to objectify his will, but he does not need *this* object as opposed to *that*. This capacity to alienate one's property, because it means transferring an entitlement, requires contractual relationships and a legal system. The appropriation of objects, therefore, may be a sheer act of will by the free subject, but the act of appropriation has to be conjoined with social recognition. So at the heart of the property relationship that seems so individualistic is a noncontingent social dimension within which entitlement is recognized.

As we have seen, Hegel does not see the modern commercial system as necessarily yielding a radically individualistic vision of society. Rather, the very activities so characteristic of the commercial system, both in production and exchange, presuppose very intricate patterns of relationship. At the heart of the system of needs, therefore, can be seen seeds of mutuality and social solidarity. Nor is this just a feature of labor, tools, invention, and property: It is true equally of other features of the system of needs, the division of labor, the generation of economic value, and membership of corporations. In all of these cases Hegel tries to show that below the surface play of rather arbitrary atomism there are generated criss-cross patterns of human interrelationships that may not be discernible in any immediate way. Modern solidarity has to be detected, exposed, and described by the philosopher. This is a philosophical task even within the sphere of political economy because although political economists have done important work in producing a sketch of the structure of the modern economy, they have done so in terms of rather one-dimensional and simplistic postulates about human nature, which has led them to undervalue precisely those social corollaries of economic activity that Hegel wishes to bring to the fore in his account. In addition they have failed to connect their accounts of, for example, labor, with any more general theory about human nature and its development, which would have enabled them to put the sphere of the economic into a broader perspective, which would have included, as it does for Hegel, putting it into the moral, political, and cultural perspective of the modern world. Hegel seeks throughout to relate economic activities to an individual anthropological dimension—attempting to place economic activity such as labor and ownership of property into an account of the incremental development of the powers and capacities of the individual human mind—and equally to link these developments with their social effects, which he regards as being basically integration.

## THE SYSTEM OF NEEDS

Hegel's account of how the modern system of needs can provide a basis for mutual interdependence and social solidarity is not exhausted by his attempt to demonstrate the integrative forces at work in the activities undertaken within the system of needs. Such patterns of integration do exist: But in Hegel's view they do so in a somewhat haphazard fashion. The intricate patterns of interrelationships secured within the system of needs may be very easily disrupted by changes in the methods of production and the demand for new commodities, and by external factors such as changes in the terms of trade between one nation and another. The interrelationships produced within the system of needs are fragile: "Whole branches of industry which supported a large class of people suddenly disappear because of a change in fashion or the values of their products fall because of new inventions in other countries."<sup>39</sup> Hegel's conclusion is that "the system moves this way and that in a blind and elemental fashion and like a wild animal calls for permanent control and curbing." As a result of this somewhat fragile set of mutual interactions Hegel argues that there has to be some form of control over economic relationships if the patterns of dependence secured in the system of needs are to be rational, stable, and capable of being exhibited by systematic thought. Here again, we may perhaps see the influence of Steuart on Hegel. Although by the time of the Jena period (1801-1807) Hegel was aware of the work of other political economists, notably Adam Smith, these ideas about the necessary limitations of the laissez-faire economy are less likely to have common from that particular source than they are from Steuart. Steuart's doctrine of the statesman was, as we have seen, expressly formulated in his discussion of the exchange economy as an instrument of control over that economy, with the object of preventing changes in the terms of the economy harming the commonwealth. Rosenkranz, in his discussion of Hegel's relationship with Steuart, argues among other things that Steuart influenced Hegel's thinking on the police role of the state,<sup>40</sup> and the connection between Hegel's preoccupations as we have seen them developing so far and Steuart's argument appears at precisely this point. By "*Polizei*"<sup>41</sup> is meant the general controlling function of the state over society as a whole, and in his writings of this period Hegel begins to work out a theory of public authority, or the police functions of the state, which would enable the blind system of dependence secured in the system of needs to be made more rational and secure. It is crucial to his aim—to show that the modern world can secure some sense of community—that he be able to demonstrate that the modern state has the structure and the will to intervene in the economic life of society if tensions within that sphere could lead to the forms of social solidarity engendered

within it breaking down. In fact, it was Hegel's view that the modern state did exhibit this feature; both in France under Napoleon and in Prussia after 1807, the state did take a hand in overseeing the development of the economy on progressive lines, but in such a way as to secure the basis of social solidarity within the economic sphere.<sup>42</sup>

However, Hegel's actual theory of the role of public authority and its relationship to the system of needs is rather different from that of Steuart. The latter's theory of the statesman did not entail any particular view about the character of the control to be exercised by the government; indeed his use of the wholly general term "statesman" would seem to indicate this. Hegel, however, wished to argue that only state intervention in the economy by a public authority of a special kind could be legitimate in the context of the modern commercial economy. Hegel was as concerned as Steuart about the general equilibrium of the exchange economy, but his interest in the sort of control involved went beyond that of Steuart. We are told by Rosenkranz that Hegel fought against what was dead in Steuart's system and that he sought to save "the inner life of man within the commercial system."<sup>43</sup> It is in his account of public authority that we can best see the actual preoccupations of Hegel on these issues.

It seems that there are two aspects of Hegel's desire to save the inner life of man within the commercial system, and both of these aspects require for their treatment a move on Hegel's part beyond the theories on *dirigism* put forward by Steuart. The first is concerned with the way in which a sense of individuality and subjective freedom are incompatible with some *dirigist* programs; the second is concerned with the enervation of the individual within the productive processes of modern manufacturing industry and the ways in which the state can provide ways of overcoming this enervation. These two perspectives on the role of the individual and his inner life within modern society will now be discussed in turn.

In considering the police functions of the state in securing the equilibrium of the system of needs, Hegel seems to have retained in his mind the possible sense of estrangement that can exist between the individual and the state, which he explored in his essay on "The Positivity of the Christian Religion": "The picture of the state as the product of his own energies disappeared from the citizen's soul. The care and oversight of the whole rested upon one man or a few."<sup>44</sup> Such an emphasis upon the possibly estranged character of the modern state was lacking in Steuart. Hegel, however, rejected any idea of intervention that smacked of rigidity and dictatorship. This point comes out very clearly in his criticism of Prussia in 1800-1801 in *The German Constitution*: "In recent theories, carried partly into effect, the fundamental presupposition is that a state is a machine with a single spring which imparts movement to the rest of the wheel in its infinite

complexity and all the institutions of society should proceed from the supreme public authority and should be regulated, commanded and overseen by it."<sup>45</sup> Mere control will not suffice for Hegel. The equilibrium of the system of needs is important, but the equilibrium should not be secured by the state at the risk of stifling the individual and his pursuit of subjective freedom within the market by the rigidity of its control. Hegel takes up this point again in *The German Constitution*: "This is not the place to argue at length that the centre, as the public authority, i.e. as the government must leave to its citizens whatever is not necessary for its appointed task. Nothing should be so sacrosanct to the government as facilitating and protecting the free activity of citizens in matters other than this . . . for the freedom of the individual is inherently sacrosanct."<sup>46</sup> The point being made here is not only a moral one, it has a metaphysical side that ties it into the previous discussion of the system of needs. Modern commercial society, based upon free labor, has seen the gradual emancipation of the individual, giving him through his labor a sense of his own worth and a sense of himself as a center of subjective freedom. So the system of needs is a center of subjective freedom and particularity. Consequently, any form of state control over an economic system that realizes such values must be compatible with the existence of such values. Hegel is thus attempting to steer a middle course: Nonintervention in the system of needs would be disastrous, because all that would then exist would be blind and irrational forms of mutual interdependence; on the other hand, too much control by a remote government might secure equilibrium but at the cost of producing further estrangement between the citizen and the political order. The problem of this *via media* is well put in the *Philosophy of Right*: "Two views predominate at the present time. One asserts that the superintendence of everything properly belongs to the public authority; the other that the public authority has nothing to regulate here because everyone will direct his efforts towards the needs of others."<sup>47</sup> The second point will not stand because of the way in which the system of needs is the sphere of particularity, and no regulation would mean a system out of equilibrium; the first position outlined here is incompatible with the individual's sense of subjective freedom, which is realized in the system of needs over which control is to be exercised. Only a society without a sense of subjective freedom could justifiably use this form of social control, and Hegel gives as an example the building of the pyramids in Egypt.<sup>48</sup> In this kind of society, in which the consciousness of subjective freedom has yet to dawn and take hold, such centralized control of the labor and economic activity of individuals is justified. However, in the modern world we are emphatically not in that position. The public authority must control the minimum necessary for the maintenance of equilibrium within the system of needs and, furthermore, as the external



state (i.e., imposed upon the particularity of subjective interests in the economic sphere), it has to be under some kind of representative political control, otherwise it will appear as the state did to the Roman, an estranged institution. The kind of control that Hegel sees as being legitimately within the sphere of the public authority is the fixing of the prices for the basic necessities of life, the arbitration of disputes between producers and consumers of commodities, the dissemination of information relating to the terms of trade, and the general economic situation within which industry operates. The operation of the public authority in these sorts of spheres will enable the system of needs to operate more effectively and calculably than it otherwise would have done. At the same time, although an advocate of *dirigism*, as we have seen, Hegel is very clear that the subjective freedom of man, part of his inner life, should be considered very carefully when deciding what to oversee in the system of needs.

The second way in which Hegel goes beyond Steuart in his concern with the individual personality within the commercial system is his consideration of the enervation of human capacities and powers, which goes on within the productive processes of modern society. Hegel retained a great deal of respect for the Greek ideal of the wholeness and integrity of the personality, and he was concerned with man's fate in terms of this value in the modern world, and most especially within the system of needs. Already, as we have seen, in the argument over the role of the public authority, Hegel was concerned that this intervention would not diminish subjective freedom more than necessary, but at the same time he was well aware that this subjective freedom, which reached its zenith in the modern world, has its own costs and in Hegel's mind these costs, broadly speaking, were twofold. In the first place the pursuit of subjective freedom within the system of needs may result in civic ties being lessened, even though, as we have seen, the system will yield its own forms of economic interdependence; second, laboring within manufacturing industry may well lead to an enervation of the human personality. In these two ways again the inner life of man was threatened by the commercial system. In the first case he would be made over to entirely subjective interests, whereas Hegel was always clear that human beings were responsive to other values as well, to do with group or state enterprises; in the second case the division of labor was making labor too mechanical and abstract. Again both of these factors were absent from Steuart, although they were present in the writings of Adam Smith and Adam Ferguson, whom Hegel had read by the early 1800s. The first of these problems, the dissolution of civic ties caused by the self-centered nature of bourgeois life, was a well-known problem, discussed by Herder, Goethe, Schiller, and Hölderlin within Hegel's own cultural context; the second problem, the enervation of man within bourgeois society, was

posed particularly strongly by Schiller in his *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man*, in which he argues: "Eternally tied to a single fragment of the whole, man develops into nothing but a fragment. Everlastingly in his ear is the monotonous sound of the wheel he operates. He never develops the harmony of his being and instead of stamping the imprint of humanity upon nature, he becomes no more than the imprint of his occupation and his specialised knowledge."<sup>49</sup> This insight of Schiller into the enervating character of the modern laboring process was probably backed up by Hegel's reading of Adam Smith. In *Jenenser Realphilosophie I* he quotes the example of the pin factory cited by Smith in his *Enquiry into the Wealth of Nations* in the context of some general reflections upon the character of labor within manufacturing industry.<sup>50</sup> In *Jenenser Realphilosophie II* he is very explicit about this: "A mass of the population is condemned to the stupifying, unhealthy and insecure labour of the factories, manufactures, mines and so on. . . . this necessity turns into the utmost dismemberment of the will inner rebellion and hatred."<sup>51</sup> The problems posed by commercial society are not just those confined to social cohesion but also concern the inner life of men, the social and personal cost of the emancipation of the individual, which clearly occurs, in Hegel's view, within the modern world, and reached its zenith of individuality within the system of needs. Again a political economy that is going to be philosophically adequate has to be able to come to terms with these kinds of costs incurred in economic activity. While at the same time allowing for subjective freedom we must understand the modern state as supplying institutions that go some way at least toward mitigating the worst of these costs.

In Hegel's view there are solutions to these problems both within the system of needs itself and outside it. Within the system of needs he is concerned to show that in this context belonging to a social class and to a corporation are important group ties in which individuals lost in particularity can come to a sense of group affiliation and thus some of the enervating aspects of their subjectivism can be overcome.<sup>52</sup> These group ties of class and, to speak more modernly, occupational community are also valuable in that they are not institutions or relationships imposed on persons from outside the economic sphere but arise out of the subjective pursuits in the economic sphere. As a member of a class and of a corporation I am able to become aware of claims upon me that restrict my self-seeking and impose upon me some natural-seeming group constraints. These constraints are not of a universal character; they are rather sectional, or, as Hegel would say, specific, but nonetheless, the claims that I represent to myself as a member of a partial community or class are an incremental advance on my unfettered subjectivism. This kind of partial community membership will not give a person a universal consciousness, a perspective on his society and the values

realized in it as a *whole*, and this is true of any group affiliations within the system of needs. But this does not imply, as, for example, Rousseau thought, that such intermediate groups stood in the way of the specific individual attaining this universal, this sense of identification with society as a whole. On the contrary, in Hegel's view, such institutions act as important intermediaries between the individual with his personal desires, interests, and freedom and the universal interests of society as a whole. Without these intermediary institutions within commercial life the individual would be unable to attain the universal; he would, as Hegel sometimes puts it, "be lost in particularity." Therefore, the partial communities of class and group affiliation act as educative institutions within commercial life and lift men gradually and without apparent constraint above the purely private pursuit of personal utilities. As such these partial communities overcome some of the enervation of the person caught up in the continual striving for personal utility so characteristic of bourgeois life and at the same time again reveal that within commercial society there are autonomously engendered forms of community and ways of mediating community identity between individuals.

At the same time these communities are only partial, and the perspective on life that they offer is one of sectional interest rooted within the system of needs. There is still no sense of personal identification with an overall normative order that expresses universality and impartiality—features that Hegel regards as necessary features of any rounded, total human life. This universal dimension to life is provided by the state proper and the general cultural life of the community, its art, religion, and philosophy. Only within the state and the culture of the national community can the universal be realized. Within the strictly political sphere the particular individual is related to the state via the specificity of his social and class position to the Assembly of Estates. Although the modern world has realized most of all, and in many divergent directions, the values of freedom and moral autonomy, Hegel thought that the French Revolution and the subsequent Terror had demonstrated the impossibility of direct democracy in the modern world; but at the same time tyranny and despotism, however enlightened, are incompatible with the values realized in the modern world generally, which also have this central place, as we have seen, in the system of needs. A representative political system represents not so much individuals lost in privacy, as they are when taken on their own, but individuals related to one another in estates or classes—the basic partial communities of the system of needs. Through this form of representation the individual, however particularized his activity may be within the system of needs, does have this relationship with the specific partial communities and via them to the universal embodied in the interests of society as a whole. At the same time,



as this rather oblique political involvement overcomes this fragmentation of his being, so the involvement also prevents the state appearing as an alienated form, as it did to the Roman. Hegel sums up his thoughts about representation via estates in a way that brings out this point particularly well:

The Estates stand between the government in general on the one hand and the nation broken up into particulars on the other. Their function requires them to possess a political and an administrative sense and temper, no less than a sense of the interests of individuals and particular groups. At the same time the significance of their position is that in common with the organised executive, they are the middle term preventing both the extreme isolation of the crown, which might otherwise seem a mere arbitrary tyranny and also the isolation of the particular interests of persons, societies and Corporations."<sup>53</sup>

Through the partial communities of the system of needs and the representation of the most basic of these—the class-based community—through the Assembly of Estates in the political sphere, the enervation of the individual so characteristic of the system of needs is diminished and, in addition, civic ties are forged between individuals and the groups that within the system of needs reflect their interests. Hegel seems confident that this is how the political arrangements of the modern European state will seem to the individual citizen:

The result is that the universal does not prevail or achieve completion except along with particular interests and through the cooperation of particular knowing and willing; and the individuals do not live as private persons for their ends alone, but in the very act of willing these they will the universal in the light of the universal and their activity is consciously aimed at none but the universal end. The principle of modern states has prodigious strength and depth because it allows the principle of subjectivity to progress to its culmination in the extreme self-subsistent particularity [in the system of needs], and yet at the same time brings it back to the substantive unity and so maintains this unity in the principle of subjectivity itself.<sup>54</sup>

So we can see that Hegel's early ideals—the restoration of some sense of the wholeness of man and the human personality, a restoration of some sense of community, and a redefinition of man's relationship to nature—are seen by Hegel to be realized in the structure of the modern political community, once that structure is understood. This structure is not on the surface and thus, unlike the Greek, the modern man does not have a sensuous experience of being at home in the world. The modern man can only be *bei sich selbst* when he has grasped the forces making for integration and communal identity in the modern world. It is Hegel's thesis that these forces are there

to be found, and their positing is not just a consoling fantasy projected on the world by the deracinated intellectual with something of an admiration, however ambiguous, for the communitarian structure of Greek society, the individual's sense of personal wholeness, and his sense of integration into nature, into Mother Earth. Although the Greeks' achievement of this was to be done by the senses and celebrated through art, that of the modern man has to be procured by prodigious effort, by "taking on the exertion of the concept."<sup>55</sup> In the final section of the paper I not only argue that it is absolutely necessary, given his philosophical aims, that Hegel should have propounded his vision of the communitarian tendencies within the political economy of modern society; this vision applied in this field is in fact the Achilles' heel of Hegel's work, and is capable of undercutting the whole of his attempt to show that the modern state can provide man with a home in the world. I also argue that this can be shown without importing external considerations drawn, say, from Marxist critiques of his account of bourgeois society, nor from analytical critiques of his whole philosophical enterprise, but rather from his own admission that he is unable to see how the modern state, predicated upon the kind of production and exchange system that he outlines in his various accounts of the system of needs, can cope with the problem of poverty, with all that poverty entails for Hegel.

## POVERTY

In the *Philosophy of Right* Hegel argues that poverty is an endemic and ineradicable feature of modern society. It is not a feature of a particular industrial society when it is in a state of decline or disintegration, but rather when it is running smoothly, when, as he says, "civil society is in a state of unimpeded activity."<sup>56</sup> Poverty, by which Hegel means both physical deprivation and an internal sense of alienation from society on the part of those who are poor, is thus, for Hegel, an apparently structural phenomenon, generated by the smooth running of modern society. The mechanics of the process are a bit obscure, but the main outline of the argument seems to be clear enough.

When industry produces goods, as it does incessantly under the pressure of men's wants, it may well find that there are not enough consumers for its products. As Hegel says: "the evil consists precisely in an excess of production and the lack of a proportionate number of consumers who are themselves producers."<sup>57</sup> In such circumstances the bottom will drop out of the market for a particular commodity and men who, by the continuing refinement of the division of labor within the system of needs, are entirely dependent on industry producing this or that particular product, for which

there is not a market in these circumstances, will be thrown into idleness. These sorts of consequences, he seems to think, follow from the general organization of manufacture in civil society, and the poverty resulting from this has two distinct sides—the actual level of physical deprivation involved and the consequent changes in the social attitudes of those who are deprived. In Hegel's view the level of poverty or deprivation is not fixed by some definite or objective standard based upon a notion of absolute or basic need but rather by some notion of the lack of satisfaction of relative need—need relative to what is necessary to be a functioning and integrated member of a particular society with a particular standard of living and a particular pattern of consumption: "When the standard of living of a large mass of the people falls below a certain subsistence level—a level regulated automatically as the one necessary for a member of the society . . . the result is the creation of a rabble of paupers."<sup>58</sup> In a comment on this paragraph Hegel gives a pithy and practical application of his point of view: "In England, even the poorest believe that they have rights; this is different from what satisfies the poor in other countries."<sup>59</sup>

Poverty is then, for Hegel, a state of relative deprivation: deprivation relative to the normal or average standard of living in a particular society. In this view he is surprisingly modern in his outlook. It is also precisely at this point that poverty as both a relative concept and a state makes contact with Hegel's other view that there are social attitudes that are characteristic of poverty: a sense of rootlessness and alienation, a set of social attitudes that leads to the formation of a rabble existing, so to speak, on the edges of society. Because of their deprivation and poverty men become deprived of various advantages of society—acquiring skill, education, access to justice and even to organized religion—all of which are mediating institutions that link men to the social system. Bereft of this link they become estranged: "Poverty in itself does not make men into a rabble; a rabble is created only when there is joined to poverty a disposition of mind, an inner indignation against the rich, against society, against the government, etc."<sup>60</sup> The unimpeded activity of civil society therefore establishes norms relating to need and consumption. These norms are not absolute but are related to the particular pattern of economic activity in the society; at the same time such a society is not able to satisfy the consumption needs of large groups of people in that society in terms of its own criteria of need. Consequently a group of people are pressed down to this internally posited poverty floor, and within such groups there is generated a profound sense of alienation and social hostility. Modern society then renders groups of people deracinated and compels them to live both materially and spiritually on the very periphery of society. What then becomes of Hegel's claim that he can provide an account of the modern world that will enable man to be *zu*

*Hause*, to be integrated into the modern political community and find it expressive of his own deepest desires? It is absolutely necessary for the coherence of Hegel's vision that he be able to provide an answer to this probing question. The institutions of the modern state should be able to provide a way of overcoming this structural tendency of modern society to produce groups of social outcasts. If he could show that such institutions are present or are at least intimated within the general structure of the modern European state, then the coherence of his theory would be vindicated; without it there is a gaping hole in his view that, correctly understood, the modern state can provide man with a home and a sense of belonging in the modern world.

However, it is clear that Hegel cannot do this, and he admits as much in his discussion in the *Philosophy of Right*, although he does not sufficiently attend to the consequences of his admission for the coherence of his own overall theory of modern society. In paragraph 245 of the *Philosophy of Right* Hegel discusses several possible solutions to the problem of poverty as he sees it. The first solution is that of organized charity, utilizing money raised from taxes levied on the wealthier classes or money raised from private foundations of various sorts, monasteries, hospitals, etc. But the problem created by charity is that although the physical poverty of the deprived may be alleviated, it will do nothing to change those social attitudes that, as he has argued, go along with poverty. Poverty undermines self-respect, self-subsistence, and self-maintenance, but so does charity. Charity will not cure the problem because, as he argued, these same social attitudes engendered by poverty are equally sustained by charitable activity: "the needy would receive subsistence directly, not by means of their work, and this would violate the principle of civil society and the feeling of individual independence and self-respect in its individual members."<sup>61</sup>

Another possibility open to the modern state might be to create work by stimulating the economy. However, in Hegel's view, this would in the long run only make matters worse, because the problem of poverty has been caused by overproduction in the first place and so cannot be cured by further economic growth. Hegel, writing in 1821, did not entertain the possibility of creating work by providing for public works that do not issue in consumer goods. Bereft of the Keynesian way out Hegel was left to conclude: "It hence becomes apparent that despite an excess of wealth civil society is not rich enough, i.e. its own resources are insufficient to check excessive poverty and the creation of a penurious rabble."<sup>62</sup> Modern society within its own boundaries generates poverty, and the alienation that Hegel sees goes with it, and is by his own admission unable to overcome this central structural feature.

The only solution that Hegel can envisage is that of colonization—not for

the sake of raw materials but more to seek new markets for overproduced goods and for transporting part of the population—just those who are driven to deprivation by the unimpeded activity of civil society. For Hegel, as for Rosa Luxemburg, Lenin, and Bukharin, there is an internal connection between capitalist society and imperialism. Imperialism, for Hegel, is the only solution to the problems of poverty, and as those problems are interminable so is imperialism. However, the important point to notice, so far as the argument of this paper is concerned, is that the modern state cannot *within itself* provide the answer to one of its own self-generated problems. Consequently, the modern state, however philosophically comprehended, cannot provide a home in the world for certain of its members. Hegel has delved deeply into this aspect of modern society and has in his own terms provided a conceptual grasp of it; but for the poor man faced with having to move to the colonies, an understanding of the inner dialectic driving civil society to push beyond its own limits is poor recompense. This seems to be a clear case in which Hegel's famous assertion made within the *Philosophy of Right*, "*Ich ist in der Welt zu Hause wenn es sie kennt, noch mehr wenn es sie begriffen hat*," sounds very hollow. At the heart of this claim there lies a deep contradiction and one that strikes at the heart of the Hegelian theory of reconciliation. As a recent commentator has argued, "Does not Hegel's manifest inability to find a solution to the problem of poverty indicate his failure as a social philosopher in the terms of his own philosophy which has as its purpose the systematic inclusion of the totality which would mean the overcoming of all contradiction and alienation."<sup>63</sup> Perhaps in certain moments Hegel was aware of this. Certainly he was concerned with the problem of poverty from a very early period, and it was a concern that, with all the problems it poses for his own system, stayed with him for the rest of his life. In Rosenkranz, we find Hegel reported as being concerned sufficiently with the problem prior to 1800 to have made excerpts from English newspapers that reported Poor Law debates in Parliament: "Hegel followed with great excitement the Parliamentary debates on the poor law and the alms by which the nobility and the aristocracy of wealth attempted to appease the rage of indigent masses."<sup>64</sup> Rosenkranz also argues that it was in the no longer extant commentary on Steuart's *Inquiry* that Hegel concentrated his ideas on poverty, and there are discussions of the problem in *System der Sittlichkeit*, in *Realphilosophie I* and *II*, and in the *Philosophy of Right*. It was thus a problem that goes all the way through Hegel's writings, and in his very last works on the subject he came no nearer to solving it. Hegel was always concerned with the inner life of man and the quality of human relations, yet here, in the heart of his theory of society, which represents virtually the culmination of his attempts to



produce this transfigured grasp of the modern world in the interests of just these values, there is this deep discrepancy between what is required by the character of the theory and the actual structure of society.<sup>65</sup>

## NOTES

1. "La Doctrine Economique de Hegel et la Conception Hegelienne Travail" in *Hegel Studien*, Beiheft 4 (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag, 1965). "Les Origines de la Pensée Economique de Hegel" in *Hegel Studien*, Band 3 (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag, 1965).
2. Paris: Libraire Dalloz, 1963; 1965.
3. London: George Allen and Unwin, 1973, and Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1973.
4. Nohl, ed., *Hegels theologische Jugendschriften* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1907; reprinted Frankfurt am Main: Minerva, 1966).
5. F. G. Nauen, *Revolution, Idealism and Human Freedom* (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1971).
6. J. Taminiaux, *La Nostalgie de la Grece dans l'Idealism Allemand* (Paris: Gallimard, 1968).
7. Even in 1805 in *Jenaer Realphilosophie II*, ed. J. Hoffmeister (Hamburg: F. Meiner, 1969), he is still able to write as follows about the Greek city state: "In der alten Zeit war das Schöne öffentliche Leben die Sitte aller, Schönheit (als) unmittelbare Einheit des Allgemeinen und Einzelnen, ein Kunstwerk, worin kein Teil sich absondert vom Ganzen, sondern diese genialische Einheit des sich wissenden Selbsts und seiner Darstellung" (p. 251).
8. Nohl, op. cit., p. 9.
9. Ibid., p. 16.
10. See Schiller's poem, "Die Götter Griechenlands," written in 1787-88 in Schiller, *National Ausgabe*, eds. Blumenthal and von Weise (Weimar: Bohlau, 1943), vol. 1, pp. 190ff.
11. Nohl, ed., *Hegels theologische Jugendschriften*, p. 28.
12. Chamley, "Les Origines de la Pensée Economique de Hegel," pp. 226-27, and particularly: "En depit de leur artifice, les besoins ne present pas comme une contrainte: il ne cessent pas de faire partie de la nature humaine."
13. Ibid., p. 227.
14. Particularly in "The Positivity of the Christian Religion," in Nohl, ed., *Hegels theologische Jugendschriften*, pp. 139ff.
15. Ibid., p. 251.
16. This sociological account of the decline of folk religion is given in Nohl, ed., *Hegels theologische Jugendschriften*, pp. 220-21.
17. London, 1767. Reprinted in an edition edited by A. Skinner (London: Oliver and Boyd, 1966). Hegel read and made a commentary on this book between 19 Feb. and 16 May, 1799; see Rosenkranz, *Hegels Leben* (Berlin: Wiss. Buchges, 1969), p. 86. Unfortunately this commentary is no longer extant. Manfred Riedel is one of the few commentators to have discussed Steuart's influence on Hegel in his *Studien zu Hegels Rechtsphilosophie* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1969), pp. 75ff. G. Lukacs, in *The Young Hegel*, trans. R. Livingstone (London: Merlin

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- Press, 1975), argues that it is useless to estimate the influence of Steuart's particular economic principles on Hegel (p. 71). I have no general defense to offer to this charge other than suggesting that the reader pay careful attention to the points made in the body of the paper.
18. As Chamley rightly says: "L'Inquiry est avant tout une theorie de l'evolution," in *Economie Politique chez Steuart et Hegel*, p. 59.
  19. This comes out particularly clearly in the unpublished text by Nohl, which begins *Zu Abrahams Zeiten*. . . . See H. S. Harris, *Hegel's Development 1770-1801* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), p. 285.
  20. Nohl, ed., *Hegels theologische Jugendschriften*, p. 246.
  21. *Ibid.*, p. 245.
  22. *Ibid.*, p. 253. Cf. H. Marcuse, *Studies in Critical Philosophy* (London: New Left Books, 1972), p. 162.
  23. Leszek Kolakowski helped me a good deal to clear my mind on this point. On all of this cf. *Philosophy of Right*, trans. T. M. Knox (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), para. 194.
  24. Nohl, ed., *Hegels theologische Jugendschriften*, pp. 322-23.
  25. *An Inquiry into the Principles of Political Economy*, ed. A. Skinner, p. 122.
  26. The *Inquiry* was written in Tübingen where, as a Jacobite, Steuart lived in exile after the abortive 1845 rebellion.
  27. *Jenenser Realphilosophie I*, ed. Lasson (Leipzig: F. Meiner, 1932), p. 328.
  28. *The Phenomenology of Mind*, trans. J. Baillie, 2d ed. (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1931), pp. 238-39.
  29. *Jenenser Realphilosophie I*, pp. 239-40; cf. *The Phenomenology of Mind*, p. 377.
  30. I borrow this term from Schiller.
  31. *Philosophy of Right*, para. 189.
  32. Compare the account given of invention by a latter-day Idealist, Michael Oakeshott, in *Rationalism in Politics* (London: Methuen, 1962).
  33. *Jenenser Realphilosophie II*, p. 197.
  34. *Ibid.*, I, p. 221.
  35. *Philosophy of Right*, para. 39.
  36. See C. B. Macpherson, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962).
  37. *Jenenser Realphilosophie I*, p. 240.
  38. *Philosophy of Right*, para. 71.
  39. *Jenenser Realphilosophie II*, pp. 232-33.
  40. Rosenkranz, *Hegels Leben*, p. 86.
  41. See *Philosophy of Right*, para. 231 and Brian Chapman, *Police State* (London: Pall Mall Press, 1970).
  42. See W. H. Bruford, *Germany in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965).
  43. Rosenkranz, *Hegels Leben*, p. 86.
  44. Nohl, ed., *Hegels theologische Jugendschriften*, p. 223.
  45. *Schriften zur Politik und Rechtsphilosophie*, ed. Lasson (Leipzig: F. Meiner, 1923), p. 28. Cf. *Dokumente zu Hegels Entwicklung*, ed. J. Hoffmeister (Stuttgart: Frommann Verlag, 1936). This view of the state was certainly held by Justi, one of Steuart's mentors, in almost identical language; vide Justi, *Gesammelte Politische und Finanzschriften* (Leipzig, 1761), vol. 3, pp. 86-87. There is some discussion of Cameralism in M. Oakeshott, *Human Conduct* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), p. 300, and in G. B. Parry, "Enlightened Government and Its



Critics," *The Historical Journal*, 6, no. 2 (1963).

46. Lasson, ed., *Schriften zur Politik und Rechtsphilosophie*, pp. 28–29.
47. *Philosophy of Right*, addition to para. 236; cf. para. 124.
48. *Ibid.*, para. 236.
49. Schiller, *National Ausgabe*, vol. 20, p. 322. Hegel thought that these letters were a masterpiece; see the letter from Hegel to Schelling, 16 April, 1795, in *Briefe von und an Hegel*, vol. 1, ed. Hoffmeister (Hamburg: F. Meiner, 1952).
50. *Jenenser Realphilosophie I*, p. 238.
51. *Ibid.*, II, p. 232.
52. This has a good deal in common with modern theories of occupational communities. For further discussion of these themes see my paper, "Community: Concept, Conception and Ideology," *Politics and Society*, Fall 1977.
53. *Philosophy of Right*, para. 302.
54. *Ibid.*, para. 260. The additions to this paragraph are also well worth reading on this point.
55. G. A. Kelly, "Notes on Hegel's Lordship and Bondage," *The Review of Metaphysics*, June 1966.
56. *Philosophy of Right*, para. 243.
57. *Ibid.*, para. 245.
58. *Ibid.*, para. 244.
59. *Ibid.*, para. 244 addition.
60. *Ibid.*
61. *Ibid.*, para. 245. This problem very much exercised the British Hegelians such as Bosanquet and Green. They argued that charity could be part of the answer to poverty if charitable donations could be given to those who, on investigation, could be shown to be in a position to use it effectively to improve their position. To be effective and to avoid Hegel's difficulty charity must be organized and given only to the deserving poor. Bosanquet was active in the Charity Organisation Society, which had just this aim.
62. *Ibid.*, para. 245.
63. R. L. Perkins, "Remarks on the Papers of Avineri and Pöggeler" in *The Legacy of Hegel*, ed. O'Malley (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1970), p. 220.
64. Rosenkranz, *Hegels Leben*, p. 85.
65. This paper has been read in the Universities of Glasgow, Hull, Manchester, and Oxford. I am particularly grateful for the comments of the following: in Glasgow, Professor G. B. Parry and Dr. A. Skinner; in Manchester, Professor I. Steedman and Dr. H. Steiner; in Oxford, Professor L. Kolakowski and Dr. Z. Pelczynski; and in Hull, Dr. R. Berki.

# HEGEL'S THEORY OF SOVEREIGNTY, INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS, AND WAR

Errol E. Harris

## SOVEREIGNTY

"*L'Etat c'est moi*" declared Louis XIV, and on his canon he had inscribed the legend: "*ultima ratio regum*." Hegel appears, at any rate *prima facie*, to endorse both doctrines. "Sovereignty," he says, "exists only as subjectivity certain of itself, as the abstract (and to that extent groundless) self-determination of will in which the finality of decision lies. It is this, the individual aspect of the state as such, in which alone it is one. Subjectivity, however, exists in its true form only as subject, personality only as person. . . . This absolute decisive moment of the whole is, therefore, not just individuality in general, but an individual, the Monarch."<sup>1</sup> Further, Hegel maintains that because the fundamental principle in relations between states is their respective sovereignties, "they are to that extent opposed to one another in the state of nature,"<sup>2</sup> and "the conflict of states, for that reason so far as their particular wills find no agreement, can only be settled by war."

Quoting passages from Hegel in isolation from their context is as unscholarly as it is fruitful of misunderstanding and misinterpretation, the outstanding example of which is Sir Karl Popper's critique in *The Open Society and Its Enemies*.<sup>3</sup> In the first place, any careful reader will be aware that Hegel, despite what is quoted above, does not identify sovereignty with the monarch. The monarch personifies the state and embodies its individuality. Hegel protests that the state is no merely legal or fictitious person but is a genuine individual personal in the monarch. To that extent

*l'Etat c'est le Roi*. But the king is not the government; he is but one moment of the total unity, and, as ever in the sphere of the notion (to which the state corresponds), each moment is at the same time the whole. The government or constitution of the state, however, is a system of functions—legislative, executive, and judicial—sublating all the functions and institutions of *die bürgerliche Gesellschaft* and the family, and constituting an organic whole, the members of which are each and all as integral to it as are the limbs to a living body.<sup>4</sup> Monarchy is thus constitutional monarchy, and is neither despotic nor feudal<sup>5</sup>—to that extent, Louis XIV's assertion is un-Hegelian. He represents, perhaps, the historical transition from the feudal to the modern form of state, its centralization prior to its liberalization.

How far is Hegel justified in this contention of the personal character of the will of the sovereign and its embodiment in the monarch? Those who allege that he is advocating a personal despotism or tyranny are profoundly mistaken, as I shall presently show. Strictly, the *Rechtsphilosophie* is not the advocacy of any political form, but is a philosophical analysis of political forms in general, or, more properly, of the political form in principle. If Lord Bryce's description is hardly justified of Hobbes's *Leviathan* as a gigantic political pamphlet,<sup>6</sup> a similar imputation to Hegel's *Philosophie des Rechts* is even less so. When Hegel insists that the individuality of the state is, and must be, embodied in a person he is doing no more than pointing to the undoubted fact that the representative of the sovereign will is always a particular individual. Today we identify that person as "the head of state," be it Queen Elizabeth, the President of the United States, Chairman Mao, or Secretary Brezhnev. But for Hegel this is no mere empirical (and so contingent) fact; it is in principle necessary to the actualization of a politically sovereign will. Every sovereign act must, to be sovereign, bear the seal and signature of the head of state.

The key to the conception of sovereignty is the organic unity of the society as a whole, which essentially *is* the state and its sovereignty. The will of the state, what Rousseau would have identified as the general will, is not the individual will of any particular magistrate, nor that of any citizen or body of citizens, nor that of any particular institution or function of government, regarded as independent, but is the expression of the commonality in which any or all of these are but moments and in which they are all sublated.

A unity self-differentiating into mutually interdependent moments is, for Hegel, a "being-for-self," or an ideal unity. This unity of the moments, immanent in each of them yet actual only in the whole, is their "ideality." By that Hegel does not mean that the unity is not real. On the contrary, it is the truth and actuality (*Wirklichkeit*) of the moments and of the prior dialectical phases that it sublates. Consequently, Hegel says that sovereignty

is "in the first instance only the general thought of this ideality."<sup>7</sup> It operates in actual fact in (at least) three forms:

(1) First, sovereignty operates through the quasi-independent pursuit of individual (or family) concerns in civil society. These concerns, though they appear separate and independent and at times even conflicting, are in principle facets of a common interest, so far as they are all interests in and subject to the *organization* of activities that constitutes the economic and social order. It follows that they all contribute to that order not only, as Hegel puts it, "by way of the unconscious *necessity* of the matter, in accordance with which their self-seeking is transformed into a contribution to reciprocal support and the support of the whole";<sup>8</sup> but also through their undisputed and presumed interest in the general order that their activity upholds. This could be demonstrated and exemplified in detail, but for our present purpose one or two examples suffice.

The farmer, the tradesman, the craftsman, and the contractor, each following his own vocation and pursuing his own interest in apparent independence, is nevertheless providing goods and services to all the others and is contributing to the supply of common needs. The litigants in a civil suit, each maintaining his own interest against the other, are, by taking their case to court, serving the common interest in the legal maintenance of rights and the orderly settlement of civil disputes. The common benefit is not consciously or deliberately sought by any of these parties individually, but it is served in consequence of the prevailing system of social order, and necessarily so, in as much as individual ends are deliberately sought according to customary practice and within the recognized framework of social relations.

(2) The second way in which the ideality of sovereignty manifests itself is closely related to the first and is coupled with it in Hegel's exposition. It is the direct control of private professional and business activities by government regulation in those respects required by the public welfare. The common interest, here again, impinges upon and adjusts individual conduct to conform to the requirements of general unity of purpose.

(3) Third, in contrast with the relative individualism of the two preceding manifestations, in times of emergency and crisis when the safety and independence of the whole community are in peril, personal pursuits are consciously subordinated to national requirements, private interests are sacrificed to common needs, and the diverse pursuits of all citizens are unified in the service and defense of the realm. Thus, Hegel assures us, the ideality of sovereignty comes to its own proper actuality.

Karl Marx accuses Hegel of idealizing sovereignty and then "in a mystical way" infusing it into the person of the monarch. Had he started with real subjects, he avers, as the bases of the state, he would not have found this

mystification necessary.<sup>9</sup> But such criticism is rooted in misunderstanding of Hegel's use of the term "ideality" and the exegesis given above is sufficient to lay bare Marx's profound misconception. As we have seen, Hegel is not identifying sovereignty with the monarch absolutely, as Marx and Popper imagine,<sup>10</sup> nor is he idealizing it in any sense that involves denying its substantial actualization in the persons of both citizens and magistrates, as well as in the functions of government and the head of state.

Still more gross is the distortion of Hegel's meaning that represents his theory as approving despotism and providing theoretical grounds for totalitarianism. The former he explicitly repudiates, and he does so in a passage that reveals beyond doubt his conception of the state as a system of rights and liberties:

Thus oriental despotism may, on account of its similarity in that the will of one individual stands at the head of the state, be included under the vague name of monarchy, as also feudal monarchy, to which even the favoured name of 'constitutional monarchy' can not be refused. The true difference of these forms from genuine monarchy rests on the content of valid principles of right which the power of the state actualizes and guarantees. These principles are those, of freedom of property and, over and above that, personal freedom, the civil society, its industry and communities, and the regulated efficiency of official functions dependent on the laws.<sup>11</sup>

What Hegel is propounding is the theory of the rule of law under a constitutional monarchy, which, as he himself says, despotism equally with the anarchy of mob rule abolishes and destroys.

Because the sovereignty is the ideality of all particular authority, the misunderstanding easily arises, and is very common, of taking it for mere might and sheer arbitrary will, giving sovereignty the same meaning as despotism. But despotism means any state of lawlessness, where the particular will as such, be it of a monarch or of a people (ochlocracy) counts as law, or rather replaces law, while, on the contrary, it is precisely in legal, constitutional systems that sovereignty is the ideality of the particular spheres and functions.<sup>12</sup>

From these passages it is obvious that criticisms of popular government and of the "talk of 'sovereignty of the people'" that appear in the *Rechtsphilosophie* and in the *Geistesphilosophie* are not directed against constitutional democracy. In the context of these very criticisms Hegel makes it clear that his objection is to unorganized popular intrusion into the governmental process and not to the constitutional structures of democratic rule. It is the aggregate of people as *vulgus* and not the political unity of the people as *populus* that he excludes. In the *Encyclopaedia* his criticism of the English

system for giving private persons a predominant share in public affairs, whether merited or not, is immediately followed by the affirmation of the benefits of participation by private citizens in public transactions. Essentially "it is the right of the collective spirit to appear as an overt general will acting in orderly and express efficacy for the public concern."<sup>13</sup>

The use here of the phrase *allgemeine Wille* is (I suspect deliberately) reminiscent of Rousseau, and it is precisely Rousseau's distinction between a general will and a will of all on which Hegel is anxious to insist. In his comment on Rousseau in the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* he is quite explicit: "The universal will is not to be looked on as compounded of definitively individual wills, so that these remain absolute; otherwise the saying would be correct: 'Where the minority obey the majority, there is no freedom.' The universal will must really be the rational will, even if we are not conscious of the fact; the state is therefore not an association that is decreed by the arbitrary will of individuals."<sup>14</sup> One cannot reasonably doubt, in the light of these statements, that Hegel's critique is not directed against the conception of sovereignty of the people as that is advocated by Rousseau, but only against loose and confused uses of the phrase, which identify the people with a casual association or aggregate or fail to distinguish such an aggregate from a genuine community.

Popper's typically wild allegation that Hegel voiced his criticism of popular sovereignty in order to please the Prussian king, to whom he was beholden for his academic position,<sup>15</sup> is stultified by the fact that the last installment of the posthumous essay on the English Reform Bill, despite its critical character, was suppressed by the Prussian censorship because it approved of the genuinely democratic aspect of the advocated reforms and criticized the bill for failing to attack the root cause of the former abuses.<sup>16</sup>

The supremacy of the sovereign power of the state, as the highest mundane authority in the nation's internal affairs, in legislating, administering, and adjudicating the law, is a patent fact of modern history. There can be no right of defiance or revolt, for right is what the law recognizes and protects. Unrecognized rights may be claimed, but become rights only when legally enforced; and no right of rebellion can be claimed because revolt is itself the abrogation of law and order, which, if it succeeds, becomes revolution, the dissolution of the state, and the substitution of a new political authority. For Hegel, if he ever considers its possibility, rebellion is just a rampant political disease and is justifiable in a conquered province because directed against an authority that is strictly illegitimate.<sup>17</sup> In form such rebellion belongs more properly to the sphere of external affairs and comes under the concept of war.



## INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND INTERNATIONAL LAW

In external relations the state is sovereign or it is not a state, and its sovereign status has to be recognized. What is thus recognized is its independence and consequent freedom from subjection to any higher power or political authority. It is *sui juris* and, as sovereign, cannot be made subject to any law. It follows that its relation with other states is limited in form to either agreement or treaty, entered into by its own will and determined solely by its own interest, or, where agreement fails, enmity and war. It is here that ordinance becomes *ultima ratio regum* and Louis XIV is vindicated. To say this is not to glorify or romanticize war, it is simply to state what is inevitably true so long as states are sovereign. For, as Hegel, in company with Hobbes, quite clearly saw, where no superior authority regulates, the state of nature prevails.<sup>18</sup>

Treaties are observed, therefore, as they are entered into, subject only to the will and interest of the parties. Observance cannot be enforced, and the only sanction against breach is war. About all this Hegel was perfectly clear, and its truth is copiously illustrated in the facts of history.<sup>19</sup> For the sovereign state its own interests are paramount; hence there can be no community of sovereigns because community implies a common interest that takes precedence over the particular interests of members. It is this common interest within the state that makes its sovereign authority supreme and is precisely what Hegel means by its ideality. If states were to become members of an international community, their sovereignty would be dissolved and some higher sovereignty would take its place. A community of states is thus strictly a contradiction in terms.<sup>20</sup>

International law is not and cannot be the law of a community, and it is therefore not properly law, in the political sense of that word. It is not positive law, for it cannot be imposed; it is not effective law because it cannot be enforced. It rests simply on treaty and agreement, subject to the particular wills of the participants, so it cannot regulate treaties or ensure their observance. Its primary principle, *pacta sunt servanda*, as Hegel puts it, "goes no further than the ought to be"—it is an empty aspiration. The principle cannot be an article of law because the law is itself treaty, which can hardly be the source of its obligatoriness. In consequence the actual situation, as Hegel tells us, alternates between the maintenance of treaty relations and their abrogation.<sup>21</sup>

In actual historical fact treaties are as often broken as observed, if not more often, and no less frequently are they denounced or ignored, as the interests of one party or another dictate. Moreover, the worthiest and most respected of statesmen have pronounced that no obligation to keep a treaty



can extend beyond the national interest. Among them were W. E. Gladstone, Theodore Roosevelt, and even Woodrow Wilson, chief architect of the League of Nations Covenant—ostensibly a treaty to end all violations. But that no treaty could serve such a purpose Hegel was well aware.

Above states (he reminds us) there is no judge or praetor, no power that can enforce a law or ensure the bond of contract. Enforcement upon a sovereign state can only be war; when agreement fails the settlement of disputes can only be by force. It follows, therefore, as the night the day, that no league or confederation of states can secure peace, for every such association presupposes agreement, which itself depends on the particular sovereign wills and national interests. If that agreement fails the alternative is war; to try to prevent war forcibly is no less than to wage it.

The experience of half a century has borne this out in our own age, when the reasons for preventing war and the desirability of maintaining peace have been immeasurably greater than could have been conceived in Hegel's time. His analysis still holds good, and the mutual conduct of nations conforms to it to this day.

Kant's vision of perpetual peace involved the establishment of a world federation, which is precisely the transference of sovereignty from the nation-state to an international body. But Kant was confused on this point, for although he clearly understood that states as sovereign cannot combine into a super-state without contradiction, he contemplated a "federation (*Föderalismus*) of free states," and he speaks of the federation as "a compact of the nations with each other," but one of a special kind, apparently more universal, seeking to put an end to all wars forever, not just to one. But if such a compact were more universal, Kant shows us no way in which it is to be made more binding or enforceable. It is to be called a pacific federation (*Friedensbund*) but will not aim (he says) at acquiring any of the political powers of a state. It will be concerned only with the maintenance and guarantee of the freedom of states without subjecting them to promulgated laws and coercion.<sup>22</sup> If that were so, it could at best be a kind of confederation or league of nations, the futility of which for its avowed purpose we, in our day, know only too well.

Because Hegel refers to the "pacific federation" as a *Staatenbund*, Popper accuses him of misrepresenting Kant.<sup>23</sup> But the misrepresentation is Popper's, for Hegel labored under no misapprehension. He saw that no such arbitrating authority could have more effect than would be allowed by the particular wills of sovereigns, the prior agreement of which it must presuppose, and that it would therefore "remain infected with contingency."

His insight was corroborated a century later when between the two world wars of the twentieth century the League of Nations not only failed in the final outcome, but never genuinely conducted itself as a law-

enforcing authority and in no particular instance succeeded in converting international relations into anything other than power politics. The same has since been true of the United Nations, which, as originally conceived, was to have been provided with "teeth" to remedy the impotence of the League. The teeth would not have been its own, but those voluntarily provided by its members and remaining under their control. Even that, however, was more than the sovereign nations could stomach, and the organization remains toothless to this day. These bald statements have been provided with supporting evidence and argument, not only by myself,<sup>24</sup> but by more authoritative authors. Georg Schwartzberger has shown that under the aegis of the League and the United Nations relations between the nations have been no other than power politics in disguise.<sup>25</sup> E. H. Carr develops essentially the same thesis in *The Twenty Years' Crisis*,<sup>26</sup> and a similar doctrine is put forward by Bertrand de Jouvenel.<sup>27</sup>

## WAR

That power politics is the inevitable character of the intercourse between states is not only shown by the historical record, it is inherent in the nature of sovereignty. The paramount concern of a sovereign state is to maintain its power, for without means of defense its independence is in perpetual jeopardy. Because its neighbors are obsessed with a like concern, because each acts in accordance only with its own will and interest, and because no state can be trusted indefinitely to keep a treaty, each must regard potential rivals with constant suspicion and vigilance. As one augments its power so must the others keep pace. That national interests in such circumstances inevitably come into conflict is not surprising, and the very existence of a powerful neighbor may be regarded as a threat. Hegel understood all this unerringly.

A state through its subjects has widespread and many-sided interests and these may be readily and considerably injured; but it remains inherently indeterminable which of these injuries is to be regarded as a specific breach of a treaty or as an injury to the honour and autonomy of the state. The reason for this is that the state may regard its infinity and honour as at stake in each of its concerns . . . and it is all the more inclined to susceptibility the more its strong individuality is impelled as a result of long domestic peace to seek and create a sphere of activity abroad.<sup>28</sup>

Every state, in consequence, seeks to increase its power and to prevent its rivals from gaining an advantage. It becomes, with its rivals and potential

enemies, involved in an uncontrollable arms race. All its policies, when carefully investigated, will be found to rest upon and to subserve this fundamental interest in power. All its external activities are power maneuvers, in one form or another; and the peace, while it lasts, is always and only a precarious balance. Today, our political leaders acknowledge this fact in their constant pronouncements of the need to maintain the world balance of power and their expressions of fear for the maintenance of peace should that balance be unduly disturbed.

A state lacking power has no effectual voice in negotiations with others. "In the world as we find it today," said Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain in 1939, "an unarmed nation has little chance of making its voice heard." And the methods of negotiation involve the persistent use of threats, whether veiled or open, which are usually described euphemistically as "pressure" and necessarily backed by the potential use of force, without which no pressure can be exerted. The result is a continual series of intermittent crises threatening the peace, and the eventual outcome can hardly fail to be open warfare. In short, Clausewitz's dictum in reverse is true of international relations, for here politics is war carried on by other means. Today this is no less true than it was in Hobbes's or Hegel's day, and both of them understood perfectly the inevitable character of relationships between sovereign states.

To see things as they are is not, however, necessarily to approve of their being so, and to realize the inevitability of war in interstate relations is not the same as to advocate it. There is nothing in Hegel's doctrine that actually glorifies war, and what he writes in its favor is consolation for an unavoidable evil rather than eulogy.

War, he says, is not to be regarded as an absolute evil, which is far from saying that it is to be welcomed as a positive good. It has an ethical aspect, which even today few would wish to deny, especially those who, in Britain during the perilous months of 1940 and 1941, experienced precisely what Hegel, in this connection, perspicaciously describes. When the existence and independence of the nation is endangered, the loyalty and devotion of its citizens are most readily called forth, the sacrifice of private interests to the preservation of the nation is most complete, and the solidarity of the people is most fully realized and most intensely felt. All industrial and professional functions are subordinated to the public need, and life itself is held expendable in the national cause. The ethical aspect that Hegel stresses is the aspect of sacrifice and service. He never glorifies (as did Mussolini and Hitler) the destructive and disruptive aspects of aggression. Nor does he hold, with Spengler, that man is by nature a beast of prey, or attempt to condone the element of hate and ferocity that war encourages. He seeks only to insist upon the altruistic virtues and patriotic loyalties that it requires and excites.

That war also involves harsh and undesirable aspects is not denied. It is the negative aspect of the state's external life, the incidence upon it of the other that must be overcome and somehow reconciled. But as the state, for Hegel, was the ultimate unity of a nation's organized life, the only sublation of this negativity he could contemplate was that provided by world history. Here alone could the ultimate resolution of conflict be achieved in the hegemony of a nation embodying the dialectical phase of development of the *Weltgeist* appropriate to the age. It is for this reason that he saw *die Weltgeschichte als das Weltgericht*.

But in the early nineteenth century war was a very different phenomenon from what it has become in the twentieth. In the eighteenth it had been little more than a dangerous but gentlemanly blood sport. With Napoleon it became more generally destructive, but not until our own time has it developed into a universal disaster. Hegel could still point to mitigating advantages, the stiffening of the national moral fiber, regeneration of the national spirit, and the revitalizing of cooperative solidarity. Today even these by-products are liable to be obliterated by the universality of the holocaust that war occasions.

Hegel knew nothing of atomic bombs and intercontinental ballistics; could he have foreseen high explosives, aerial bombardment, fragmentation bombs, napalm, chemical and bacterial warfare, he might well have concluded, as we should, that the patriotic virtues could be no countervailing advantages. So far as they encouraged bellicosity, they might even themselves become part of the general menace. Could Hegel have foreseen the character of nuclear war as envisaged today by such prognosticators as Herman Kahn and Tom Stonier, he would have seen that the very enormity of the terror of modern warfare undermines and corrodes these very virtues—as, for instance, when citizens preparing to protect themselves against nuclear fallout contemplate shooting compatriots who seek to share their forlorn and dubious shelter.<sup>29</sup>

Hegel's general theory of international politics is sound, and his insights are penetrating. Contemporary events still exemplify the principles he set out. His doctrine is not, therefore, in this respect obsolete, but the development of nuclear weapons has rendered obsolete the whole structure of politics, national and international—a structure that nevertheless, the practice of the nations preserves. What is obsolete is not the theory, for sovereignty is still sought, maintained, and recognized, and power politics continues. What has become a self-contradiction is the idea of nuclear war, even as a threat or as a putative means of self-defense, and its use as an instrument of policy.

That it is so used at the present time is patent in the feverish competition among the great powers to develop vaster and more devastating warheads and more widespread and efficient systems of delivery. "When we deter the

Soviets," writes Herman Kahn, "by the threat that if they provoke us in a limited war, subsequent reprisals may blow up into an all-out thermonuclear war, we are deliberately or inadvertently using the threat, and therefore the possibility, of nuclear war. When we tell our allies that our Strategic Air Command protects them from Soviet aggression, we are in a sense *using* nuclear war."<sup>30</sup> Yet it is generally admitted that the actual use of these weapons would destroy both attacker and defender, both potential victor and potential vanquished. *Ultima ratio regum* has become *ultimum exitium nationum*. Nevertheless, sovereign states remain in a state of nature, and the practice of power politics, with its debilitation of international law, continues. The eventual outcome is as inevitable as if written by the moving finger upon Belshazzar's wall.

If contemporary mankind could pay closer attention to Hegel's teaching, a salutary lesson might still be learned, a lesson that would after all send us back to Kant for salvation and for the solution of international problems. A pacific federation is indeed what is required, but one that will not shrink from acquiring sovereign power and authority. The difficulties in the path of such a project may be formidable and the obstacles to its establishment enormous, but they cannot match the enormity of the alternative. If that fact could be indelibly imprinted on the consciousness of men, they would make determined and persistent efforts to overcome those obstacles. This is not the place to suggest ways in which it might be done, and I have made the attempt elsewhere.<sup>31</sup> If it were done, and if the efforts reached their goal, *die Weltgeschichte* might indeed proceed *ein Weltgericht* with some hope of genuine adjudication and the maintenance of rights. Morality would no longer be irrelevant to world-historical figures operating in an anarchical state of nature where no *Sittlichkeit* prevails, and the rationality of mankind—or, perhaps, no more than the cunning of the universal reason, working through human fear and instinct of self-preservation—would give a new significance to the pronouncement that the real is rational and the rational real.

## NOTES

1. *Rechtsphilosophie*, §279.
2. *Ibid.*, §333.
3. *The Open Society and Its Enemies* (London, 1949).
4. *Rechtsphilosophie*, §278.
5. Cf. *ibid.*: "In former times of feudal monarchy, the state was certainly sovereign in external affairs, but internally neither the monarch nor the state was sovereign." Cf. also *Philosophie des Geistes, Enzyklopädie*, §544.
6. *Studies in History and Jurisprudence*, vol. II (Oxford, 1901), p. 86.
7. *Rechtsphilosophie*, §279.

8. Ibid., §278.
9. Cf. *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, trans. Annette John and Joseph O'Malley (Cambridge University Press, 1970), p. 23.
10. Cf. *Open Society*, vol. II, p. 54.
11. *Encyclopaedia*, §544.
12. *Rechtsphilosophie*, §278.
13. *Encyclopaedia*, §544.
14. E. S. Haldane and F. H. Simpson's trans. (London, 1896) (reprinted, 1968), vol. III, p. 402.
15. Cf. *Open Society*, vol. II, p. 54.
16. Cf. Shlomo Avineri, *Hegel's Theory of the Modern State* (Cambridge University Press), Chap. 11.
17. Cf. *Rechtsphilosophie*, note to §281.
18. Cf. Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Chap. 13, and Hegel, *Rechtsphilosophie*, §333.
19. Cf. my *Survival of Political Man* (Johannesburg, 1950), Chap. III and IV, and *Annihilation and Utopia* (London, 1966), Chap. V and VI.
20. Cf. *ibid.*
21. *Rechtsphilosophie*, §333.
22. *Zum Ewigen Frieden*, sec. II, Art. 2.
23. Popper quotes Hegel in Knox's translation, which advisedly uses the phrase "League of Nations," and Popper was writing at a time when the League of Nations set up after World War I had signally failed to prevent World War II.
24. Cf. *The Survival of Political Man*, Chap. V; *Annihilation and Utopia*, Chap. X.
25. Cf. *Power Politics* (London, 1951).
26. London, 1939, 1946.
27. *On Power* (Geneva, 1945; Boston, 1962).
28. *Philosophy of Right*, trans. T. M. Knox, §334.
29. "In Las Vegas, J. Carlton Adair, the head of the local civil defence agency announced that a militia of 5000 volunteers would be necessary to protect residents in the event of thermonuclear war against an invasion, not by a foreign enemy, but by refugees from Southern California, who, he said, would come into Nevada like a swarm of locusts. In Hartford, Connecticut, at a private meeting of citizens to consider civil defence, one man maintained that firearms were standard equipment for shelters as a means of repulsing the inroads of people maddened by the effects of wounds or radiation. One's own family, so it was argued, must be protected because there would be only sufficient food and water for them. Neighbours caught in the open by warning of the attack, who might rush to friends for shelter and assistance must, therefore, be shot down" (*Annihilation and Utopia*, pp. 121f.).
30. *Thinking about the Unthinkable* (London and Princeton: Horizon, 1962), p. 101.
31. In both of the works cited above. Cf. especially *Annihilation and Utopia*, Pts. II and III.



## PERSON, PROPERTY, AND CIVIL SOCIETY IN THE *PHILOSOPHY OF RIGHT*

Peter G. Stillman

Hegel discusses property in greatest detail at the beginning of the *Philosophy of Right*,<sup>1</sup> in the part entitled "Abstract Right." The actors in "Abstract Right" are persons. Logical abstractions from individuals, persons have their arbitrary free will (to "do or forebear doing"<sup>2</sup> as they wish), lack a developed moral and ethical will, and regard particular characteristics (such as age and heights, desires and passions) as inessential (35, 37). Persons face a world of things—natural objects and animals, lacking free will and incapable of rights (42). Property comes into existence when a person puts his will into a thing and makes it his own (44). Property thus results from a mental act; the person simply decides that he wishes the thing: "I want it," "this is mine." Hegel's person claims property in a way different from the claimants of many other modern theorists who, like Hegel, rely on a prepolitical condition: Locke's natural man must mix his labor with the natural object; Blackstone's prehistorical man must occupy the object.<sup>3</sup>

Because it is a single person who puts his will into the thing, property for Hegel is inherently private property (46). Because property derives from the will, Hegel sharply distinguishes property from possession, which is related to the person's needs and interests:

The particular aspect of the matter, the fact that I make something my own as a result of my natural need, impulse, and caprice, is the particular interest satisfied by possession. But I as free will am an object to myself in what I possess and thereby also for the first time am an actual will, and this is the aspect which constitutes the category of property, the true and right factor in possession.(45)

In other words, possession is the particular and external act; property is the underlying right. Because possession is not the essence of property, "what and how much I possess, therefore, is a matter of indifference so far as rights are concerned" (49), and thus the distribution of property can be (and is)



unequal, so long as each person has at least some property (Enc. 486) in order for his free will to have actuality.

Although willing is the essence of property, the person must "occupy"—by grasping or marking—his property in order that others may recognize it as his (51). These persons then relate to each other by making contracts. In a contract, persons freely exchange "single external things," of equivalent value, deciding which properties to exchange according to their own arbitrary wills (75, 77). So persons relate through the medium of things, and recognize each other as persons through recognizing each other's property and through the free and equal contract relationship.

The content of the *Philosophy of Right* is the science of objective spirit. In the circle that is Hegel's philosophy (2), it follows the science of subjective spirit, in which the free will develops itself fully, but in abstraction from the objective external world (27). Faced with that world which is so different from itself, the free will seeks to grasp and comprehend it, to transform the objective world into a world of freedom (29) and into a world penetrated and permeated by the free will (33). Property is thus "the first embodiment of freedom" (45R)—from Hegel, a multifaceted statement.

Property is freedom because it is the first actualization of the free will (and its freedom) in objectivity. The free will thereby overcomes "the pure subjectivity of personality" (41A) and attains an objective existence for itself. Thus, property is a necessary and substantive end and right of the free will (45R).

For Hegel, property is not primarily a means to the attainment of other ends. In many labor theories of property, where "emphasis is placed on my needs, then . . . property appears as a means of their satisfaction" (45R). If property is justified primarily by social convention, as in Hume and Rousseau,<sup>4</sup> then property is merely a means to whatever ends the society determines. Because Hegel's political philosophy begins with the person's right to property, and actualizes that right in civil society (208), it is marked by the attempt to recognize, generate, and maintain individuality.<sup>5</sup>

In a strict logical sense, property is the precondition for all other freedoms in the objective world, since it is the first and essential externalization of the subjective will. Concurrently, property is the precondition for freedom because the property right—the will in the thing—is the basis for the rights of the person to life and liberty. Hegel sees the person as claiming himself through his willing to own, to occupy, and to modify himself: "it is only through the development of his own body and mind, essentially through his self-consciousness's apprehension of itself as free, that he takes possession of himself and becomes his own property and no one else's" (57). Once a person gains property in himself, his rights are inalienable. Since a person can alienate only "single external things" (75, 65),

therefore those goods, or rather substantive characteristics, which constitute my own private personality and the universal essence of my self-consciousness are inalienable and my right to them is imprescriptable. Such characteristics are my personality as such, my universal freedom of will, my ethical life, my religion. (66; see 66R)

The right to property is the original of the rights to life and liberty.

For Hegel, property is paradigmatic; using the claim to property as a model, the person claims his right to life and liberty. Hegel's approach differs from, for instance, Locke's. Where Hegel treats property in things first, Locke postulates the individual's property in himself, i.e., his right to life, as the original: "every Man has a *Property* in his own *Person*. . . . The *Labour* of his Body, and the *Work* of his Hands, we may say, are properly his."<sup>6</sup> Locke assumes that the individual owns himself as property, and derives property in things from property in self.

From this difference in paradigmatic rights flows a difference in emphasis generally between Locke and Hegel. Since Locke begins with the assertion that individuals own their minds and bodies, he regards that property as a given, not as a task for the individual nor as a problem for his political philosophy. But Hegel sees that the individual's appropriation of himself as his own property—his self-conscious apprehension of himself as free—is neither automatic nor easy. Thus, much of Hegel's political philosophy is devoted to developing and discussing the means whereby the individual can gain possession of and property in himself. Hegel defines rights broadly, including not only rights to "life, liberty, and estates" (57, 44) but also, for instance, rights to formal education (174), public services (242R), and subsistence (241), i.e., to all that is necessary for the individual fully to appropriate and own himself. Similarly (Hoffmeister, 338), Hegel sees education (*Bildung*) as crucial for an individual to attain his rights to life and liberty and to "translate into actuality what one is according to one's concept" (57), a free and rational being. The lessons the person learns in wrong, the subjective willing of morality, and the rational institutions of ethical life are all directed in part toward the education of the individual into all facets of ethical life and reason (187R). Freedom must "be first sought out and won; and that through an unending mediating discipline and cultivation [*Zucht*] of the intellectual and moral powers."<sup>7</sup> Because Hegel sees and allows for the possibilities of variation and development in the individual's appropriation of himself, he defines rights broadly and sees education (*Bildung*) as of central importance.<sup>8</sup>

Property is freedom also because it gives the individual a scope for action and makes it possible for him to extend and expand his personality. In the most obvious sense, the person gains a locus for action by his will just by putting his will in the thing and then by occupying it. The further relations

of the will to the thing that Hegel spells out—taking possession, use, and alienation (53)—indicate that the person's scope for activity is broad: He can do almost whatever he wishes to do (and can effect) to the property, including to use it whatever way he pleases (62) and, in contract, exchange it for any other property. In civil society, the individual's property allows him to pursue his own idea of satisfaction in whatever way he wishes, subject to the constraints of his resources and of the interactions of society. To guarantee that property and thus the individual's freedom, the administration of justice exists (208).

Property is also an essential condition for the possibility of moral action. Without property, i.e., without a locus for the independence of the individual will, the individual cannot be independent of, for instance, the purely substantive life like Greek ethical life, or the strict and immoral legalism that pervaded both China and Rome.<sup>9</sup> In a society without property, the restraint imposed upon an individual by his membership in society is not, and has not the opportunity of becoming, a self-imposed restraint, a free obedience, to which—though he can do otherwise—the individual voluntarily submits because he sees it as his true good.<sup>10</sup>

The person develops his own personal characteristics through property ownership as well. Through the exercise of his arbitrary will, the person attaches to himself various properties that express his will. By appropriating as his property his mind and body, the person is in a position to create his own characteristics, aims, and intentions. In his private property, the person as a unit has privacy, in that he can enclose himself within that property and exclude others (46). Thus, he has a space in which he can produce his own achievements, and define his own substantial being, without being swamped by the external world. Finally, in occupancy and especially in contract, the person gains explicit recognition from other persons that he is a person with rights. Through his property, the individual creates himself in society and is recognized therein by others as a full member.

At the same time, however, it is clear that the person must go beyond being a property owner—and that man must be more than economic man—if he is to develop his personal characteristics and his scope for action. Property, although a form of freedom and necessary for individuality, is limited, in part because in property the will has "its freedom *immediately* in reality, in something external, therefore, in a thing" (Enc. 513). For instance, the characteristics of the abstract person are not very appealing:

To have no interest except in one's formal right may be pure obstinacy, often a fitting accompaniment of a cold heart and restricted sympathies. It is uncultured people who insist most on their rights, while noble minds look on other aspects of the thing. (37A)

Similarly, in the system of needs the individual need look after only himself and his own desires (182A), ignoring "other aspects" of himself, others, and the situation. The will that is content to find its freedom in property, the individual whose property is his highest concern, the isolated individual concerned only with his own desires—all are defective, unable to participate fully in the education and development of ethical life.

Not being in a construct of pure freedom, the will in property is limited by the external characteristics of the thing. What the person can and cannot do with his property, for instance, is partially determined from the outside, by nature and society, i.e., by the particular characteristics of the thing he owns as property and the social context in which he owns it. Similarly, by putting his will in such a thing, the person makes himself vulnerable; his will "becomes liable to the lot and chances that external things suffer."<sup>11</sup> Hegel, in short, sees that property, although necessary to individuality and freedom, may also be in tension or conflict with them.

To mitigate the tension and conflict between property and individuality, Hegel sees that it is necessary that the person come to be concerned not solely with rights but also with what is moral, not solely with his own self and its property but also with what lies beyond himself and his property. Thus, the person must be educated in ways of living that are not exclusively tied to rights and to property. The education limited to rights and property—and thus to contractual interactions in civil society—is an education that need make the individual only "Industrious and Rational,"<sup>12</sup> with a cold heart and restricted sympathies (37A). So, for Hegel (although not, for instance, for Locke),<sup>13</sup> it is necessary for education to include morality and a variety of types of social interactions. Through the understanding of morality, and through the social institutions of the family, the state, and civil society (187R), the individual comes to be more than merely a property-owning person and more than narrow economic man; he has a concrete set of characteristics and attitudes that shape and express; indeed that are, his life.<sup>14</sup>

In other words, property contributes to individuality only by being both posited and transcended. Hegel's political philosophy is founded on property; but it is founded on property only so that it can transcend property. This transcending, of course, is an *Aufhebung*; property is not only overcome, it is also preserved. The individual who has developed himself by education and noncontractual social interactions, although he has surpassed the limiting characteristics of the property-owning person and the economic man of contract, nonetheless still needs and uses his right to property. To the fully developed individual, property is a permanent apparatus for carrying out a life plan, an effort to give reality to a conception of his own good, his further development, and his self-satisfaction.<sup>15</sup> Because the individual is

more than the person, property is valuable not because it provides the means for the realization of the arbitrary or selfish whims of the person, but because it is an essential for the full life of reason of the individual.

Property represents freedom in a further way. The prevalence of property manifests man's liberation from and dominance over nature, and man's liberation from the direct domination of other men. Property is the proof of man's control of nature. As Joachim Ritter has argued well and at length, behind the apparent objective immobility of property as a thing is hidden, for Hegel, the historical activity that has led to the domestication of nature, that has transformed nature into things and thus, as thing, into that which can be appropriated by man.<sup>16</sup> For instance, the freedom of the Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans was limited by their worship of and reverence for some animals and other parts of nature, which were, in effect, regarded as having rights that could not be infringed.<sup>17</sup> Only by transforming nature into things—objects without rights—has man, historically, made possible property and its concomitant rights, of life and liberty; the freedom of man is thus directly related to the reification (*Versachlichung*) of nature.

Nature is reified; and things are also humanized. Contract is the manifestation of this humanization; for, in a contract, things (properties) that are very different from each other are exchanged by persons. What makes the contract an equal and valid contract is not the particular differences the individual properties possess, but rather the underlying commonality that they share:

what thus remains identical throughout as the property implicit in the contract is distinct from the external things whose owners alter when the exchange is made. What remains identical is the value.(77)

Since value is defined in terms of satisfying human needs (63), the universal and common element in things (properties) is value, i.e., human needs.<sup>18</sup> Things and property are humanized.

The historical activities that transform nature into humanized things are work and (conscious) social interaction.<sup>19</sup> It is work in a social context by which man has historically transformed nature from a terrible force alien to and oppressing him into a force controlled by, manipulated by, and at the service of man. What the slave performed in the prepolitical condition described in the *Phenomenology* is transformed and regularized in civilized civil society (Enc. 432A) (and the dichotomy between the work of the slave and the desires of the master is healed by the union of work and need in civil society [192]), where man continues to dominate nature and to liberate himself through the social context of needs and through work (194, 195). Property and contract, the continuing manifestations of the reification and humanization of nature, are thus the continual proof that the external world

is a world of things to be dominated; and property and contract are also, in civil society, one set of means by which the external world is transformed into a world for man. Nature, humanized, does not dominate but rather serves man.

Through property, the individual is also liberated from natural, direct, or full domination by other men in all relations of ethical life and especially in economic relations and in civil society. The master-slave relationship cannot exist in ethical life, in which the ownership of property by all makes each independent of the other. But one precondition for this independence is the ability of men to transform themselves—or limited portions of themselves—into things, i.e., the *Versachlichung* of human beings.

At the beginning of the section "Property," things that can be property are strictly defined, as external natural objects. When the person appropriates his own mind and body as his property, he gains the inalienable rights of life and liberty (66). Thus, no person can be the slave to another. But, for those whose labor on their own property does not produce enough of what they desire (or need), the definition of alienable things is expanded:

Single products of my particular physical and mental skills and of my power to act I can alienate to someone else and I can give him the use of my abilities for a restricted period, because, on the strength of this restriction, my abilities acquire an external relation to the totality and universality of my being. (67)

Thus, a person can work for another, without becoming a slave, by contracting for a limited portion of time.

Further, persons in a contract situation "really exist for each other . . . only as owners" (40), only through the mediation of each person's private property. The baker relates to his customer not directly, but through the medium of the baker's bread, which the customer wishes, and the customer's money, which the baker wishes in exchange for the bread. By retaining and legalizing contract, civil society makes concrete the reification of individual relations.<sup>20</sup>

In civil society the reification of humans and of human relations increases individual freedom and equality. First, because of the universal possibility for the laborer to alienate part of his labor time while nonetheless maintaining his freedom, "for the first time, liberty becomes, without any limitation, the principle of a society,"<sup>21</sup> as all unfree forms of subordinate work relationships—slavery, serfdom, indentures—are abolished as unright (57R).

Second, since human relations are mediated through things and property, an individual's occupation, social interactions, and status are not determined by feudal hierarchies, noble (or non-noble) birth, caste systems, or other rigid hierarchies. Although the unpredictable chances of birth and the



marketplace exist in civil society, these chances can be overcome by individuals; in many previous societies, on the other hand, the chance of birth was determining and unconquerable, the will of the ruling group unchangeable (200, 201A, 206).

Third, because human relations are reified in contract, men relate to each other as equals—for the contract relation is an equal one, in terms of the substance (i.e., value) of the property exchanged (77). Fourth, the freedom from direct dependence of one person on another is increased by money. For Hegel, money is the abstraction that represents value, or utility in satisfying need (63). Money frees men from the direct dependence on others. In the modern state, services owed can be paid with money, earned or obtained as the individual chooses to or can earn it, and need not be paid in kind, i.e., by one specific type of labor. There is, for instance, no more *corvée* (299A), nor payment of land rent in kind. In sum, the reification of humans and their relations liberates man from other men, develops freedom, and guarantees equality.

But Hegel also perceives the drawbacks of reification that critics of civil society, such as Burke and Marx, stress.<sup>22</sup> Since persons in a contract relate to each other through the mediation of the properties being exchanged, persons tend to define other persons—and also themselves—in terms of things. Thus, it is not surprising that, in civil society, individuals are concerned with what others have. Hegel raises the idea of “keeping up with the Joneses” to a philosophical level: The “demand for equality of satisfaction with others” involves “emulation, which is the equalizing of oneself with others” (193). Although this emulation is, for Hegel, essential because it is related to the liberation in social needs (194), nonetheless it in large measure involves copying appearances and thus frequently material objects; so that others are frequently copied, not as individuals, but as the sum of their material possessions.

The reification of human relations also explains the morality of interactions of civil society, especially what has been labeled “wage slavery” and the like. The interactions of civil society do not (immorally) involve using other men as means, because of the prevalence of contract. All contract relations about property are voluntary, not coerced; moreover, they do not use other men as means, they only involve using property (defined as “single external things” [75]) as means, and thus wage labor is the using as a means not the other person (that would be slavery) but a restricted and limited thing, e.g., an hour’s labor.

But the results of these not-immoral interactions are interactions that are amoral: “in civil society each member is his own end, everything else is nothing to him” (182A). Thus, the reification of relations tends to lead man in the system of needs to be self-centered and impersonal, and to



depersonalize his interactions. Further, the escape from slavery to wage labor has its disadvantages. As Hegel lectured,

The Athenian slave perhaps had an easier occupation and more intellectual work than is usually the case with our servants [and day laborers], but he was still a slave, because he had alienated to his master the whole range of his activity. (67A)

The expansion of individual freedom that derives from the reification of men is purchased at a price.

The extensions of personal freedom that derive from property have yet more serious costs: the chaos, and the poverty and misery, of civil society. The working of the system of needs, in the context of private property and wage labor, leads to capital (*Kapital*). Although Hegel does not explicitly distinguish nor explain capital separately from property (*Eigentum*) or resources (*Vermögen*), he does introduce the term "*Kapital*" in his discussion of classes (*Stände*) (200) and then of the highly developed, ongoing, and active system of needs where the police intervene (237).

The workings of the (capitalist) economic order are frequently chaotic, especially "in the case of the larger branches of industry," which are dependent on foreign trade and thus on distant and uncontrollable events (236). There is also continually "the danger of upheavals arising from clashing interests" and from the working of economic laws of which the participants in the economy "themselves know nothing" (236R). Hegel does think that on the whole "a fair balance between [conflicting interests] . . . may be brought about automatically" (236), and that, where adjustments were necessary, the public authority (*Polizei*) could intervene as a control standing above the competing parties and conscious of economic laws and necessities.<sup>23</sup> But, despite the general harmony of interests, and despite the police, civil society is subject to upheavals.

Another serious cost is that "civil society affords a spectacle of extravagance and want as well as of the physical and ethical degeneration common to them both" (185). The rich—both the "leisure class" and those intensely and narrowly concerned with their own interests—suffer. The leisured, nonworking rich are like the master in the master-slave dialectic in the *Phenomenology*, who does not liberate himself either from external nature through work (194R) or from his naturally given desires through social needs (194). The rich person who remains solely concerned with his own interest also suffers, since he too misses out on the liberation of needs and work and does not participate in the recognition that derives from membership in a corporation (254, 255).

The poor also suffer. Unlike the rich, the poor suffer physically. They also participate little if at all in the liberation of social needs and of work.

Furthermore, when poverty becomes grinding enough (a level that varies from country to country),

and when there is a consequent loss of the sense of right and wrong, of honesty and the self-respect which makes a man insist on maintaining himself by his own work and effort, the result is the creation of a rabble of paupers. (244)

For Hegel, there is eventually a relationship between poverty and *misère*. And this poverty is necessary, not avoidable (245). It is "one of the most disturbing problems which agitate modern society" (244A).

Hegel's discussion of poverty, misery, and the rabble suggests that he is aware of the problem of the worker's lack of property in anything other than his own labor. For Hegel, as for T. H. Green lecturing sixty years later,

a man who possesses nothing but his powers of labour and who has to sell these to a capitalist for bare daily maintenance, might as well, in respect of the ethical purposes which the possession of property should serve, be denied rights of property altogether.<sup>24</sup>

Like T. H. Green, although for slightly different explicit reasons,<sup>25</sup> Hegel sees no way out of this dilemma. In a purely formal sense, the laborer is free by virtue of having property in his powers of labor; he may also benefit to some extent from some of the liberation implicit in property. But in terms of most of the benefits, of freedom and education, for which property is valued, the laborer himself gains nothing.<sup>26</sup> And there is no way—for T. H. Green or for Hegel—to change or to conceptualize a possible change in that situation.

Finally, although in property and civil society the individual is liberated from his dependence on nature and on other men, in civil society he is also made dependent on an economic order that, while rational overall, contains much that is natural, external, and contingent—and these aspects greatly influence the individual's final status in society. "A particular man's . . . opportunity of sharing in the general resources . . . are . . . dependent . . . [in part] on accidental circumstances whose multiplicity introduces differences in the development of natural, bodily, and mental characteristics" (200). Since the goal of the individual in Hegel's civil society is not wealth but education (187) and recognition (254, 255A), these differences in status would be irrelevant (on Hegel's terms) if all occupations and classes had education and recognition available equally. But clearly at least the very rich and the very poor fail here (185).

In part because Hegel delves at such length into the uses of property and thus discerns and explicates the workings of civil society, he presents the ambiguities inherent in property as freedom for individuals. Property is the

manifestation of and locus for individual free will; it is the result and continuing condition for the liberation of man from the domination of nature and of other men; it is the basis of the expanded equality, opportunity, *Bildung*, and freedom for individuals in the modern world. But civil society, where these ethical aspects of property are developed, is not unambiguous.<sup>27</sup> It contains ethical degradations in its extremes of wealth and poverty and the result of those extremes, and in the inequalities of education and recognition by others. Property is and produces freedom for the person in abstract right; for the men who inhabit civil society, it produces ethical benefits for many, but ethical degradation for a few.

Although civil society fortifies, protects, and manifests many aspects of property apparent in "Abstract Right," the family and the state—the other two major moments of ethical life—generally are outside the realm of property and contract. Since contracts can only be about "single external things" and not, for instance, about the whole of one's life, neither marriage nor the citizen's relation to the state can be matters of contract (75R). Similarly, private property is subordinated and transformed in the family and the state. In the family, property ought to be treated as the family capital or resources (*Vermögen*), not as individual property (171). In the state, the influence of property-owning burghers on the monarch and legislature is limited (281, 301R); the property of the agricultural class is entailed to help make them good legislators (305); and the state sometimes causes the destruction of property in war (324R).

This demarcation means that the freedoms and the costs, the liberations and the degenerations, of civil society do not exist in the family and the state. Hegel places property and contract in civil society in order to limit their costs to civil society and to allow other spheres to have other types of human relations with other benefits. For instance, Hegel's state can seek the common good, the universal, because it does not have as its prime aim the protection of property. Equally, Hegel places property and contract in civil society because, despite their costs, they are essential for freedom; property and contract liberate man from nature and other men and produce personal freedom and equality. Property must be posited and developed for individuals to be free; but property alone is inadequate for a full life of freedom, and so property and its relations must be transcended, by institutions not based on property, by the family and especially by the state.<sup>28</sup>

## NOTES

1. G. W. F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right* [1821], trans. with notes by T. M. Knox (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1945); Hegel, *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*, ed. Johannes Hoffmeister, 5th ed. (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1955). In con-

formity to the sensible continental practice, citations to the *Philosophy of Right* are placed in parentheses in the text, and are according to section (not page) number; where the material cited is from the main text of the section, the section number alone is given; where it is from the "remarks" Hegel added to the text, the section number is followed by "R"; where it is from the "additions" that later editors appended to posthumous editions by collating student lecture notes, the section number is followed by "A". Hegel wrote marginal comments in his own copy; these, untranslated by Knox, are cited by the page number of the German edition, preceded by Hoffmeister's name. The material in the *Philosophy of Right* is presented, in briefer compass, in G. W. F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind* [1830], trans. William Wallace (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1894), which is Part Three of G. W. F. Hegel, *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften* (1830), eds. Friedrich Nicolai and Otto Pöggeler, 7th ed. (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1969), cited in parentheses in the text, with the section number preceded by the abbreviation "Enc."

The best treatment of Hegel's discussion of property is Joachim Ritter, "Person und Eigentum," in his *Metaphysik und Politik* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1969) and (in French) as "Personne et Propriété selon Hegel," *Archives de Philosophie*, 31, no. 2 (Apr.-June 1968), pp. 179-201. In addition, Hugh A. Reyburn, *The Ethical Theory of Hegel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967 [1921]), is always helpful on the *Philosophy of Right*; and T. H. Green, *Lectures on the Principles of Political Obligation*, presents a sophisticated neo-Hegelianism. Unfortunately, most recent full-length treatments of Hegel's political philosophy devote little space to property.

For other discussions of "Abstract Right," see Peter G. Stillman, "Hegel's Critique of Liberal Theories of Right," *American Political Review*, 68, no. 3 (Sept. 1974), 1086-92; David E. Cooper, "Hegel's Theory of Punishment," in Z. A. Pelczynski, ed., *Hegel's Political Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971); and Peter G. Stillman, "Hegel's Idea of Punishment," *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 14, no. 2 (Apr. 1976), pp. 169-182.

Since this chapter was presented as a paper, Hegel's treatment of property has been discussed by Richard Teichgraber, "Hegel on Property and Poverty," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 38, no. 1 (Jan.-March 1977), pp. 47-64. There is little overlap in Teichgraber's article and this chapter; but Teichgraber's article is defective in a number of ways, including his unwillingness to see that reason in the realm of objective spirit is not yet unencumbered, perfect reason.

2. John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Book II, Chap. XXI, sec. 15. See also, e.g., Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Chap. 6.
3. See John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, *Second Treatise*, Chap. V, and Blackstone, *Commentaries*, Book II, opening section on "Property in General."
4. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, Book I, Chap. 9, and David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, Book III, Part II, secs. ii and iii.
5. Whereas Marx's propertyless vision aims to make man a universal, not an individual, being; see Karl Marx, "Estranged [or "Alienated"] Labour."
6. Locke, *Second Treatise*, sec. 27.
7. G. W. F. Hegel, *Die Vernunft in der Geschichte*, 5th ed., ed. J. Hoffmeister (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1955), p. 116; G. W. F. Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, trans. J. Sibree (New York: Dover, 1955 [1858]), pp. 40-41.
8. For this argument developed at greater length, though with different terms and in a different context, see Stillman, "Hegel's Critique," pp. 1087-89.

9. On Greece, see Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, sec. 185, and *Phenomenology of Spirit*, VI-A; on China, see Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte*, 2d ed., ed. Georg Lasson (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1923), II, 306–8, and *Philosophy of History*, pp. 128–29 (and see Stillman, "Hegel's Idea of Punishment," sec. II and note 14); on Rome, see any of the references scattered through the *Philosophy of Right*, and especially secs. 2R, 40R, and 180R.
10. The will in the thing that is property, thus, is both a result and a manifestation of reason's complete penetration of the external world, including the world of natural (i.e., not self-conscious) myths and customs; reason in the world in property both manifests and maintains the rationality of the world. When Hegel asserts (in the "Preface" to the *Philosophy of Right*) that "to comprehend what is, that is the task of philosophy, because what is, is reason," he can know that "what is, is reason" because the will has fully penetrated the world, in property as in other ways, and thus made the world rational.
11. Reyburn, *Ethical Theory of Hegel*, p. 126.
12. Locke, *Second Treatise*, sec. 34.
13. Ibid., and Stillman, "Hegel's Critique," p. 1086 and notes 7 and 8.
14. The assertions in this sentence are developed in Peter G. Stillman, "Hegel's Civil Society: A Locus of Freedom," *Polity* (1979).
15. See T. H. Green, *Principles of Political Obligation*, secs. 213–20.
16. See Ritter, "Person und Eigentum," sec. 6.
17. G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte*, II, 479–80; Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, p. 212.
18. Or what Marx would call "use value"; see *Capital*, vol. I, Bk. I, sec. i.
19. Although Ritter stresses only work (and thus on this point follows Marx's view of the proper interpretation of Hegel), it is clear that both work and interaction make up the process. Historically, interaction (in the form of the recognition of the other) is the goal—as both cause and result—of the master-slave struggle and thus of the work of the slave. Looked at from another perspective, work without interaction would clearly be inadequate in the context of Hegel's "Phenomenology": Without interaction (and the self-consciousness and recognition that it gives), human labor would be purely natural and unself-conscious, i.e., human labor would be like the labor of animals. But, with interaction and its resulting recognition and self-consciousness (*Phenomenology*, Chap. IV-A; Enc. 430–35), labor becomes human, and humans develop out of their natural condition toward a more spiritual and rational condition. In civil society, the modern manifestation of the historical struggle, liberation occurs both through work (195R) and interaction (194). See Jürgen Habermas, *Towards a Rational Society* (Boston: Beacon, 1971), Chap. 6, for a contemporary restatement of Hegel's view here.
20. For Hegel, since the family and the state are not in essence contracts (75R), the family member and the citizen are not subject to the reification of human relations; see Stillman, "Hegel's Critique," p. 1090; and see sec. 7, below.
21. Ritter, "Person und Eigentum," sec. 9.
22. Thus for instance Marx: "The bourgeoisie . . . has left remaining no other nexus between man and man than naked self-interest, than callous cash payment. . . . It has resolved personal worth into exchange value" (*Communist Manifesto*, Part I); and Burke: "But the age of chivalry is gone. That of sophisters, economists, and calculators has succeeded, and the glory of Europe is extinguished forever" (*Reflections on the Revolution in France* [New York: Library

of Liberal Arts, 1955], p. 86). See especially Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, sec. 182A.

23. Hegel's *Polizei* at least have the good of all as their goal when they intervene, since Hegel's state, of which the police are an arm in civil society, aims at the good of all, not at the protection of the property of each. When the goal of the state is the protection of property, police intervention may not be intended to adjust interests into a fair balance.
24. T. H. Green, *Principles of Political Obligation*, sec. 220.
25. Ibid., secs. 220–32, Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, sec. 245. Hegel does suggest imperialism as a short-run solution that has obvious geographical limits (246).
26. Similarly, Hegel regards corporate (as opposed to personal) property as deficient (279R), because an artificial person cannot participate in the ethical benefits of property.
27. See Stillman, "Hegel's Civil Society: A Locus of Freedom."
28. I would like to thank the American Philosophical Society and Vassar College for research grants that greatly assisted in the preparation of this paper. I am grateful to those who raised questions and made suggestions when earlier versions of this chapter were presented to the Hegel Society of America meeting and to Professor Z. A. Pelczynski's graduate seminar on Hegel at Pembroke College, Oxford.



# PRAGMATIC PRESUPPOSITIONS AND THE DIALECTICS OF HEGEL'S *PHENOMENOLOGY*

Joseph C. Flay

The main question of Hegel's *Phenomenology* of 1807 is whether or not the claims to knowledge made by philosophy (in the form of German Idealism) can be warranted in the face of counterclaims made by ordinary knowledge rooted in the natural attitude or in contrast to those made by other philosophical systems. The dialectic is at the heart of Hegel's answer to this question; yet after many attempts to clarify this dialectic it still resists the kind of clarity needed to make a clear assessment of Hegel's claims. In this paper I attempt to explicate the dialectic of the *Phenomenology* by recourse to the contemporary analysis of "pragmatic presuppositions"; my aim is to articulate the dialectic not in the exact terms with which Hegel himself understood it, but in a way that lends greater clarity without distorting his intentions. I hope to accomplish thereby not only an exegetical end, but, in view of the notice given to pragmatic presupposition in current Anglo-American thought, I hope to show some relevance for the study of Hegel among philosophers who have heretofore rather dismissed him out of hand.

In the first section I discuss Hegel's own characterization of the *Phenomenology* in the 1807 preface to that work. In the second section I sketch an account of pragmatic presuppositions and show how the logical form of presuppositions can function to make the method and content of the *Phenomenology* more intelligible.

## HEGEL'S PHENOMENOLOGY

Hegel's main project is to demonstrate warranty for his claim that philosophy (as it has developed historically into his own thought) expresses the



highest and most complete truth about reality. The problem with such a demonstration is that neither the mere asseveration of this claim nor any polemical or external demonstration of its warranty constitutes the real establishment of this warranty. Hegel notes that such asseveration or demonstration leaves philosophical assertion merely on a par with the claims of common sense, the demonstrations of nonphilosophical science, and the assurances of romantics and alternative philosophical positions.<sup>1</sup> Faced with the task of avoiding a *petitio principii*, Hegel proposes to actually demonstrate the "appearance" of scientific philosophical knowledge through an examination of other claims to knowledge as they appear.<sup>2</sup>

Thus, Hegel's project was not simply a matter of refuting other claims; his intention was to furnish a "ladder" for all who were willing to climb from the naive position of natural consciousness to the position of "the absolute standpoint."<sup>3</sup> The positive connotations of the image of the ladder suggest that what is involved here is not a straightforward dispute with natural consciousness or with other philosophical and scientific positions, but rather the view that these can be related to philosophy through a series of transformations and transitions. This is clarified in the preface.

Science on its part requires that self-consciousness should have raised itself into this [standpoint] in order to be able to live . . . with science and in science. Conversely, the individual has the right to demand that science should at least provide him with the ladder to this standpoint, *should show him this standpoint within himself*. His right is based upon his absolute independence, which he is conscious of possessing in every phase of his knowledge; for in each phase of knowledge, whether recognized by science or not, . . . the individual is the absolute form, i.e. he is the *immediate certainty* of himself and, if this expression be preferred, he is therefore unconditioned *being*.<sup>4</sup>

There follows at this point a brief discussion of the differences between science and natural consciousness, after which Hegel continues:

Let science be in its own self what it may, relatively to immediate self-consciousness it presents itself as an inverted posture; or, because this self-consciousness has the principle of its actual existence in the certainty of itself, science appears to it not to be actual, since self-consciousness exists on its own account outside of science. *Science must therefore unite this element of self-certainty with itself, or rather show that and how this element of self-certainty belongs to it [i.e., to science].*<sup>5</sup>

Two demands have been made here. The first is that the *Phenomenology* must demonstrate to natural consciousness that the absolute standpoint is itself already within the structure of natural consciousness, albeit as unrecognized and unthematized. The second demand is that the *Phenomenology*

demonstrate that and how the natural self-certainty of natural consciousness is present in the absolute standpoint of philosophy. This means, among other things, that Hegel begins by rejecting neither the claims of natural consciousness nor those of philosophy, nor even by calling them into question. His task is to show the warranty for the two opposed standpoints of natural consciousness and philosophy, to show a unity existing between apparently disparate forms of experience, each of which takes the other to be "inverted," "perverse," *verkehrte*. This unity is to be expressed as a *virtual* presence of the absolute standpoint within natural consciousness, and as an *actual* presence of natural and immediate self-certainty within the absolute standpoint. Hence, there is to be no refutation of positions, but rather a program for the demonstration of the internal unity of two seemingly opposed modes of knowledge and experience.<sup>6</sup>

If we now take this double project as a clue to the structure of the *Phenomenology*, and if we assume for the moment that the project is accomplishable, then, following the main divisions of the work, the demonstration would show that self-consciousness, is virtually present in consciousness, reason in self-consciousness, objective spirit in reason, and absolute spirit in objective spirit. On the other hand, the natural and immediate certainty of consciousness would be shown to belong to self-consciousness and subsequently to reason, objective spirit, and absolute spirit. If we apply this to the various subsections of the *Phenomenology*, the same would be shown for sense-certainty, perception, understanding, desire, and so on, until absolute knowing is shown to be virtually present in sense-certainty and the certainty of the latter actualized in absolute knowing. So long as the process were unbroken this would mean that the categories of the Logic and the other philosophical sciences that follow it are virtually present in even the most naive and unreflective attitude toward reality, and that they actualize the certainty that belongs to the latter. The great problem is to show how this is demonstrated.

At this point in our discussion the dialectic must be invoked in order to show, precisely, how this is done. For Hegel the relationship between form and content, thinking and being, does not permit us authentically to decide whether or not dialectic is a method, nor precisely how it "exists" in the world (in being itself); all such considerations presuppose a separation anathema to Hegel. This dialectic of *spirit*—one cannot call it simply a dialectic of subject-object—is forceful to those who read the *Phenomenology* with care; and yet it is difficult to seize upon and say precisely what it is. Almost every commentary and philosophical exchange with Hegel contains, implicitly or explicitly, some description of the dialectic. Some commentators have even tried to formalize it in a syntactical form of logic. The latter attempts miss the point, I think, that whatever else the dialectic is, it is

a logic of discovery, not of proof in the sense applicable to formal syntactical logics; thus no formal syntactics will capture the essence of dialectic. On the other hand, these attempts to formalize arise from an authentic concern to capture that essence in a way more formally rigorous than is possible by means of a natural language description of what occurs in the content-process of Hegel's system; for these descriptions can at best give a rough anatomical description of the dialectical process. Although such descriptions can give a clue to dialectical dynamics, and thus furnish a lack found in syntactical formalization, they depend, for the success and intelligibility of the formulation, on a prior understanding of the way the chief element, negation, works in dialectics.

So the question that must be answered first is why negation operates as it does in Hegelian dialectics—what causes contradiction to occur, and how does it cause dialectics to unfold. Why do negativity and contradiction have the effect on thought and reality that they have? I think that an answer to these questions is possible if we apply to the problem the logic of pragmatic presuppositions. This nonsyntactical logic of the properties of presupposition has the advantage of dealing with a dynamic relation between two levels of experience that turn out to be, respectively, the level of thematization on which natural consciousness operates (i.e., everyday concerns, non-self-reflective experience) and the level of thematization of the "we" in the *Phenomenology* (i.e., presuppositions putatively constitutive of the intelligibility and certainty underlying the experience that results from the thematizations of the natural attitude). And, as we shall see, the logic of presuppositions also has the property of being simultaneously descriptive and prescriptive, thus transcending the problematic relationship and division between normative and non-normative knowledge and experience.

My thesis is that the dialectic of the *Phenomenology* "works" because the appearance of contradictions (including truth-value gaps and other forms of unintelligibility and inappropriateness), which do not appear in experience as thematized in the natural attitude, *signals* that a particular noetic and ontological pragmatic presupposition-set *putatively* underlying knowledge and experience is in fact *not* the actual noetic and ontological presupposition-set required for that knowledge and experience. For the remainder of this paper I clarify and defend this thesis.

## PRAGMATIC PRESUPPOSITIONS

By "pragmatic presupposition" or "pragmatic presupposition-set" I understand roughly what Robert Stalnaker has suggested in a series of important papers.<sup>7</sup>

A speaker presupposes that *P* at a given moment in a conversation just in case he is disposed to act, in his linguistic behavior, as if he takes the truth of *P* for granted, and as if he assumes that his audience recognizes that he is doing so.<sup>8</sup>

For the purposes of this paper I will not restrict myself to the relatively narrow linguistic context in which Stalnaker considers presuppositions. But we can begin to understand what is at stake here if we linger for a moment over this more narrow context in order to clarify what pragmatic presupposition entails. The most important thing to be realized is that presupposition is quite different from assumption and that it does not possess the logical form of entailment. If we take some set of statements, *S*, and claim that that set has a set of presuppositions *P*, then we are not really claiming either that *S* entails *P* or that it is entailed by *P*. Rather, if *P* is the presupposition-set for the set of statements *S*, then to affirm *S* necessitates the truth of *P*, and to deny *S* necessitates also the truth of *P*. Conversely, if *P* is held as a presupposition-set, then either *S* is true or *not-S* is true; and if *P* is not held as a presupposition, then neither *S* nor *not-S* is true. The usual entailment rule does not obtain. A simple example will show what is at stake here.

Let us say that two people are arguing whether or not all of John's children are intelligent. Whether we are arguing that all the children are intelligent or that they are not, in order to entertain *meaningfully* either of these theses, we must necessarily presuppose that John has children. The conversants must share the pragmatic presupposition-set that has as one of its elements "John has children," regardless of whether they argue for the affirmative or the negative concerning the intelligence of the children. Furthermore, John's children can be neither intelligent nor unintelligent if they do not in fact exist; so the presupposition-set is in force when we discuss our thoughts about their intelligence or make claims about their actually being intelligent or not.

A presupposition or presupposition-set, then, *determines* that there is a certain kind of intelligibility and valid warranty-claim (i.e., in this case a claim of "true" or "false") to certain statements. By simple extension, *mutatis mutandis*, there are just such presuppositions that underlie articulations of all sorts—commands, promises, questions, requests, etc.—in short, all possible speech acts. All "make sense" or are appropriate depending upon the presupposition-set in force at the time. By further extension, and with appropriate adjustments, the same can be said for experience itself and even for action. The presupposition-set, of course, normally remains implicit in the speech, activity, or experience of the individuals who are thematizing the objects or events on which they are focusing. And this implicitness is important for an understanding of dialectics. Yet the set of presuppositions

in force at any given moment actually defines the parameters of possible states of affairs, which are thematized by those concerned. What Stalnaker has shown in respect to certain locutions (and, I think, by extension this is applicable to experience and action in general) is that given the presupposition-set in force, the possible states of affairs can be defined as "just those in which all the presuppositions are true"; and given the possible states of affairs, then the set of presuppositions can be defined as "just those which are true in that set of possible worlds."<sup>9</sup>

Thus, to take the previously discussed example, given the presupposition-set containing the presupposition that John has children, we have possible states of affairs in which, among other things, it is possible for there to be children identifiable as John's who might be either intelligent or not. Given the absence of the presupposition, the possible states of affairs could not *intelligibly* contain entities with such properties. To generalize, if the required presupposition-set is in force relative to a specific situation, then it is impossible for truth-value gaps, contradictions, gaps in meaning, and other forms of unintelligibility and inappropriateness to arise; if such forms of unintelligibility and inappropriateness do arise, then this signals the failure, in some way or other, of the presupposition-set in force.

We can say, then, that a statement *S* or an action *A* or an experience *E* has a presupposition requirement *P* if and only if *S* or *A* or *E* would be inappropriate in the absence of presupposition (set) *P*. Thus, it is not possible for inappropriateness to occur if the presupposition requirement is adequately met; on the other hand if the inappropriateness does occur, then we can infer that the requirement has not been met. It is a necessary condition for appropriateness that a specifiable set of presuppositions be in force in order that certain possible states of affairs be possible.

This general pragmatic character of presuppositions is part of the framework of the dialectics of experience and reality. First of all, to say that there is a presupposition-set *required*, is to give a normative dimension to presupposition. This means at least two things: (1) we can make a distinction between proper and improper presupposition-sets that are considered putatively relative to specified possible states of affairs, and (2) we can take a putative presupposition-set and test it for adequacy relative to the specified possible states of affairs. This is so because possible states of affairs contain within themselves the requirement of a specifiable presupposition-set, and presupposition-sets make possible certain possible states of affairs and not others. From this it follows, secondly, that if one were given the possible states of affairs and also given a specified set of pragmatic presuppositions (putatively the required set for these states of affairs), then one could indeed assess the putative presupposition-set for adequacy with respect to these possible states of affairs. If the presupposition-set *claimed* as adequate for the

possible states of affairs is the *actual* set required, then inappropriateness should not occur in experiences and actions and locutions referring to or located within these states of affairs when speaking, acting, or experiencing under restrictions imposed by the putative presupposition-set. They should not occur simply because they do not occur when unreflectively involved with the respective experiences, speech acts, or actions in general. Therefore, if forms of unintelligibility or inappropriateness do occur under such restrictions, but do not occur in natural speech, action, or experience, then it must be the case that the putative presupposition-set is not actually the required set. The appearance of inappropriateness or unintelligibility in the possible states of affairs, even when restricted by a given putative set, is a sure sign of the failure of the presupposition requirement—and hence that we do not in fact have an adequate set. Experience, speech, and action thus have their own standards, as it were, “built in” by which to measure presupposition standards given in experience.

Before turning to the dialectic of the *Phenomenology*, one restriction must be made. Many, perhaps most, pragmatic presuppositions are context-specific, like the example concerning the existence of John’s children. But some pragmatic presuppositions are not specific in this way and range over many states of affairs otherwise differentiable from each other by context-specific presupposition. In this paper and for purposes of generally discussing the *Phenomenology*, context-specific presuppositions are of no direct interest. What is of interest are noetic and ontological pragmatic presuppositions that range invariantly over sets of possible states of affairs otherwise restricted by context-specific presuppositions. Generally, only those pragmatic presuppositions involving the nature of knowledge, experience, and reality are relevant to my further discussion here.

On the basis of this discussion, I turn to sketch ways in which this presupposition critique is embodied in the *Phenomenology*. My thesis, again, is that the appearance of unintelligibility and inappropriateness in the *Phenomenology*, at the level of possible states of affairs thematized in natural consciousness, signals that certain noetic and ontological pragmatic presuppositions putatively underlying knowledge and experience do not in fact constitute sets adequate to that actual knowledge and experience. The possible states of affairs are those thematized in natural consciousness; and the putative presupposition-sets for these states of affairs are at first thematized by the phenomenological “we.”

The “original” position of the *Phenomenology* in “Sense-certainty,” which I call “naïve realism,” differs in origin from that of subsequent first steps or moments in the ongoing dialectic; for it articulates the putatively required presupposition-set for experience in general, a set that could be elicited in a dialogue with someone beginning from a purely unreflective natural con-



consciousness. It involves a set of beliefs about knowledge, experience, and reality that one in the naive natural attitude might well claim to have been presupposing if he ever became reflective—or if a Socrates ever confronted him. This set is also the first example of the first moment of a dialectic of spirit. That Hegel begins with this natural set, which is supposedly acceptable to the natural consciousness that claims philosophy to be perverse, establishes an “absolute beginning” in natural certainty that is the right of every individual. No subsequent first moment has this direct relation to natural consciousness and the natural attitude; for all later articulations of putative presupposition-sets have their immediate origin in the critical steps that constitute the second and third moments of the dialectic. Nevertheless, these subsequent sets, articulated in subsequent first moments, also function as putative noetic and ontological presupposition-sets that render possible the possible states of affairs thematized in the natural attitude. Thus in “Perception” we have a set with specific presuppositions about things and their sensible properties, and in “Reason” we have one that maintains classification to be the essence of intelligibility, and in the account of the nature of things as embedded in the Greek polis we have a set reflecting the ultimate nature of the ethical order (*Sittlichkeit*). The relationship between possible states of affairs and their presupposition-sets varies in relation to each of the general levels of consciousness, self-consciousness, reason, and spirit; but the general logical relation is the same. How sets subsequent to the first set arise will now be the focus of our attention.

The first moment of the dialectic occurs, then, in a manner analogous to that which occurs again and again in the practice of the Platonic dialogues; only here the *doxai* are instead reconstructive thematizations of noetic and ontological presuppositions putatively required for the possible states of affairs thematized in natural consciousness. The task of the first moment is a descriptive one, a representation that accurately gives us a set to be considered.

In order that the second and third moments and all the subsequent moves of the dialectic make more sense one further point must be made about the first position. I have already pointed out that Hegel, to begin with, accepts both the claims of philosophy and those of the natural attitude. This would seem to cause difficulty, since they seem to be so opposed to each other. But in the course of the articulation of this “naive realist” set (supposedly defended by one in the natural attitude who has become reflective), something becomes evident that mediates the apparent total opposition between the two. There we see clearly that in presupposing warranted access to reality in its full intension and extension, the natural certainty of natural consciousness is claiming absoluteness in the sense of ultimacy. Reality is simply and totally present—as is the truth about reality. In the unreflective



approach to the world it is presupposed that certainty is not in principle a problem, although in fact it may sometimes be. This particular presupposition, making warranted certainty an immediate and natural thing, is what makes philosophy and its claims seem so perverse to natural consciousness. Absoluteness, ultimacy, and the view that what is is a univocally intelligible whole, are all part of the presupposition-set of naive realism. Now, by this presupposition the natural attitude is committed to demonstrating the warranty for its claim of warranted access to reality; this claim to warranty appears to be problematic as soon as the presupposition-set is reconstructed and "tested" in the second and third moment of the dialectic. Therefore, it is by no simple fiat of the philosopher that the dialectic proceeds; the claims implicit in naive realism and the further implicit claim that they are warranted, and indeed can be shown to be, are the actual motor of the dialectic. The natural certainty of the natural attitude is given total right to defend its own claims. In addition to this, on the side of the phenomenological "we," the absolute standpoint, or the absolute idea itself, is in no way assumed; rather, the problem of the absolute or the ultimate, as this problem has been inherited from the historical-philosophical dialogue of traditional Western philosophy, is what is assumed. To assume the position of the absolute standpoint or the validity of the absolute idea from the beginning would be to generate a vicious circle. But to assume the absolute as a thematized problematic has no such result; it is only what is done, *mutatis mutandis*, in any inquiry. Every inquiry assumes something as problematic, and if that constitutes a vicious circle for knowledge, then all inquiry involves a vicious circle. The true relationship, then, between the naive realist and the phenomenologist is, to begin with, that the latter considers the nature of the absolute or ultimate ground to be problematic, but the naive realist does not. And it is precisely on the naive realist's own grounds that he is slowly brought to see, and then to investigate, the problem of the absolute.

The second moment of the dialectic, seen in this way, also reflects a practice of the Platonic dialectic; for there we begin by assuming that an articulated presupposition-set is indeed adequate. That is to say, Hegel now takes up knowledge and experience as if it were strictly circumscribed by the presupposition-set just advanced, using examples from appropriate experiences to constitute the possible states of affairs in which appropriateness and intelligibility ought to be found, in as much as they are found there with the certainty of natural consciousness. If the putative set is in fact adequate when experience is circumscribed in its terms, then statements, actions, and experiences that normally hold as appropriate will remain so. But if the set is not adequate, then truth-value gaps, contradictions, and other forms of unintelligibility and inappropriateness will occur. Thus, the test for the adequacy of the presupposition-set as the authentically required

set derives from experiences or possible states of affairs that themselves are to be made possible on the basis of the presupposition-set just put forward.

In each case throughout the *Phenomenology* Hegel finds that the respective set under consideration is inadequate in terms of the same possible states of affairs it is supposed to make possible. In addition to failures in ordinary appropriateness, the natural certainty that implicitly claims warranted certainty of access to reality also fails to find a display of this warranty, evidencing instead some incongruity about experience, which leaves the question of access to reality problematic. For instance, if the naive realist position is assumed to be definitive, we find that we are not able to properly distinguish between particulars. But in fact we *are* able to do so, and our ordinary experience becomes unintelligible without this capacity. Therefore, the appearance of inappropriateness in this case signals that the naive realist set is not adequate for the possible states of affairs we experience and of which we have knowledge. At the various levels of the *Phenomenology* this inconsistency reveals itself in different ways and involves a steady progress of natural consciousness to the level of philosophy; but the paradigm is the same throughout. There are sets of statements *S* or of actions *A* or of experiences *E* that are appropriate. If the putative presupposition-set is adequate (is the required set), then the former should remain appropriate and intelligible. They do not. Therefore, the putative set is not adequate.

Up to this point the analysis of the dialectic in no way suggests that there is some systematic form in which the ever-new putative presupposition-sets are generated. It is the third moment of the dialectic, the speculative moment, that gives the proper *wissenschaftliche* nature to this aspect of the series. It involves a comparison between the actual possible states of affairs experienced unreflectively, on the one hand, and, on the other, the "failed" experience that has just occurred under the specific restrictions of the putative presupposition-set. The aim of the comparison, motivated by the desire for warranty in natural certainty, as well as by the desire for warranty in the philosophical problem of the absolute or ultimate, is to ascertain the specific and determinate failure (i.e., the determinate negation) that has just occurred. Each presupposition-set that follows upon the third moment of the dialectic (i.e., the third moment of the previous stage of the phenomenological series) has as one of its elements something that purports to overcome the specific failure or determinate negation of the prior set. Of course, it also has other elements; for instance, the determinate failure of the opening naive realist set is that one is unable to fix the particulars meant or intended by the speaker or knower. Thus, the next set formulated—a kind of naive idealism—is chosen on the grounds that the specific defect concerning particulars will be removed by placing "my intention" or "my meaning" as the essential constituent of knowledge and experience. After

articulating this new "idealist" set, it is examined in the same way, found inadequate, and a new set is formulated on the basis of the determinate failure of this naive idealist set. Or, to take a later example, in the examination of the general presupposition that neither consciousness nor self-consciousness, but reason, is the basis for the appropriateness of the possible states of affairs of experience and knowledge, it is at first presupposed that such reason consists essentially only of classification. But restricted to this, reason too fails to ground the possible states of affairs in which the relations between kinds of entities classified are conceived to be necessary. Thus a new presupposition-set is articulated in which laws, rather than mere classification, play the essential part in the rational observation of nature. This in turn is criticized, and so the work moves still onward.

The dialectics of the *Phenomenology* are thus not reducible to skepticism of any sort, since there is from the beginning the acceptance of the presupposition of natural certainty, which governs the movements through the work: Certainty is to be warranted concerning our access to reality. Nor are the moves arbitrary, since it is the possible states of affairs of actual experience (supposedly thematized on the given presupposition-set) that indicate the lack in the presupposition-set being examined; and in the comparison of the experience with presupposition we are given indication of what the next set minimally must be over and above the previous sets. The claims of the putative presupposition-sets are simply tested against themselves.

If the process is uninterrupted (as Hegel claims it is) and if (as he instructs) we begin with the most obvious and immediate presupposition-set (natural, unreflective consciousness) and with the natural experience of the possible states of affairs that such consciousness has access to and thematizes, then the noetic and ontological pragmatic presuppositions uncovered are all *virtually* in that consciousness and experience already, including the final set articulated under the heading of "Absolute Knowing" (set out explicitly in the categories of the various philosophical sciences). The uncovering of their presence as putative, pragmatic presuppositions furnishes natural consciousness with "the ladder," which, in effect, shows the individual in the natural attitude that the absolute standpoint is virtually within him in his thematizations of the actual states of affairs possible in experience—whereby one part of the dual task of the *Phenomenology* of 1807 is accomplished. Then in the last chapter we are not only prepared for the pure conceptual analysis to follow in the Logic and other philosophical sciences, but also brought to comprehension of the limited ways in which the sets that are putatively unconditioned or absolute are in fact abstract, conditioned sets within experience. On the other hand, it is the original self-certainty of access to the possible states of affairs in our experience that "refuses" each set prior to the last one; for it is the naturally justified certainty that our experience

involves unconditioned access to actuality that points out the determinate failures of the putative sets whenever contradictions and other signs of inappropriateness and unintelligibility appear where they otherwise should not.

Thus, both of the demands made in the preface to the *Phenomenology* are apparently satisfied: The attitude of absolute knowing is *virtually* present in natural consciousness as the final articulation of an adequate, required, noetic, and ontological presupposition-set; and the natural certainty of natural consciousness is *actualized* in the process of the dialectic, which culminates in absolute knowing.

Of course, I have not claimed to show that Hegel actually accomplishes his double task; but I think that he has succeeded so far as that task was given him by the philosophical tradition from Plato through Kant. I have only tried to make his task more intelligible, in principle, by the use of the notion of pragmatic presuppositions and possible states of affairs—a notion that has come to light more explicitly in our own contemporary contributions to that tradition.

## NOTES

1. *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (hereafter cited as PhG), 66–68/48–50. The first page citation is to the Hoffmeister edition (Hamburg, 1952); the second, after the slash, is to the Miller translation (Oxford, 1977).
2. PhG, 66/48–49.
3. PhG, 25/14–15.
4. PhG, 25/14–15. The italics are Hegel's except for the phrase "should show him this standpoint within himself," which I have added for emphasis.
5. PhG, 25–26/15. The italics are Hegel's except for the phrase "Science must therefore unite this element of self-certainty with itself," which I have added for emphasis.
6. The dialectic of the *Phenomenology* will therefore not be that of Aristotle or of the Ciceronian tradition, nor that of Kant, but rather something closer to Plato such that one is led by means of it to knowledge in the strong sense.
7. Robert C. Stalnaker, "Pragmatics," *Synthese* 22 (1970), pp. 272–89; reprinted in *Semantics of Natural Language*, eds. D. Davidson and G. Harmon (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1972), 380–97; "Presuppositions," *Journal of Philosophical Logic* 2 (1973), pp. 447–56; "Pragmatic Presuppositions," in *Semantics and Philosophy*, eds. M. Munitz and P. Ungar (New York: New York University Press, 1974).
8. Stalnaker, "Presuppositions," p. 448.
9. *Ibid.*, 450.

# PHENOMENOLOGY AND SYSTEMATIC PHILOSOPHY

Kenley Dove

In a paper read before this Society in 1970 I gave an interpretation of the transition from Hegel's *Phenomenology* to his *Science of Logic*.<sup>1</sup> In 1976 I presented the Society an argument that the categories of the *Philosophy of Right* are generated in the *Science of Logic* and not, à la Habermas, in history.<sup>2</sup> My topic for today is conceived as a further development of the previous topics. It is divided into three parts. In the first I propose a strategy for reading the *Phenomenology* as a "negative" introduction to systematic philosophy. In the second part I suggest an interpretation of the *Logic* as the formal aspect of systematic philosophy, which follows from the negative result of the *Phenomenology* and, in turn, provides the conceptual framework for a nonmetaphysical interpretation of reality. In the third part I take the most fully developed and best known section of the "real" aspect of systematic philosophy, the philosophy of objective spirit, and show how some of Hegel's most striking conceptual innovations, such as his theory of civil society, develop immanently within thought that is purified by an introductory phenomenology and formulated without any reference to concepts as abstractions from reality.

If such a project seems too vast—and perhaps it is—we can at least consider the possibility that projects of lesser scope might distort our comprehension. As an aid to keeping the whole project comprehensible, I have focused throughout on the notion of a posit—on the ultimate positivity of truth for consciousness in the *Phenomenology*, on the posit as the second moment of the logical concept, and on the positivity of the moral subject and the member of civil society in the philosophy of objective spirit.

## THE PHENOMENOLOGY AS INTRODUCTION TO SYSTEMATIC PHILOSOPHY

It has been suggested that Hegel's logic is his ontology and that Hegel's basic question is, why should there be something rather than nothing? This

might seem a plausible interpretation in light of the fact that Hegel does begin his logic with a consideration of being and nothing. Still I think that the question is a misleading clue to the argument of Hegel's logic. As a less misleading clue, I would like to propose the following questions: What is determinacy? How is determinacy thinkable? To this question Hegel gives, I believe, three basic and interconnected answers. If we may stipulate  $x$  as a symbol for the indeterminate, then Hegel's three answers to the question of determinacy might take the following forms. (1)  $x$  is determinate as a contrast, (2)  $x$  is determinate as determined, and (3)  $x$  is determinate as an individual. I should like to propose that we consider these as the respective themes of the three main parts of Hegel's *Science of Logic*, the doctrines of Being, Essence, and Concept. With the hope of making their teachings clearer, I suggest that we call these:

- (1) the logic of contrastive determinacy
- (2) the logic of determination
- (3) the logic of determinate individuality.

It will be evident that the concept of a posit, as something determined, will find its place within the logic of determination. But just as the concept of a pure posit cannot presuppose a determinate positor, it will also be evident that this logic as a whole may not begin with any determinate idea (*Vorstellung*). For the sake of emphasis, I should like to repeat this phrase. I can think of no other that more accurately captures the requirement for the beginning of a logic whose basic question is: What is determinacy? This phrase, once again, is: Logic may not begin with any determinate idea.

It is, of course, a natural idea, in modern philosophy at least, that any contact with objective truth is necessarily routed through subjective consciousness, empirical or transcendental. That is presumably why modern philosophy tends to reduce all metaphysical questions to an epistemological question. In any case, Hegel regarded this natural idea (*natürliche Vorstellung*) as the most basic conceptual framework presupposed or preposited in modern philosophy. Since the idea had become virtually second nature to modern philosophy, Hegel knew that it would be difficult to eliminate. But if, on the other hand, he envisioned (as I believe he did) a conception of a systematic philosophy that must begin without any determinate idea, it will be plausible to consider that he would formulate a manual of exercises designed to uproot this deep-set idea and habit of thought. It is as such a manual of exercises that we can, I believe, best read his first published book, the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Its final objective is to absolve that natural idea mentioned in the opening sentence of the introduction to the *Phenomenology*. The stage of final absolution from the natural idea Hegel calls "absolute knowing" (*Das absolute Wissen*). At this stage, the subject of the *Phenomenology*, consciousness, may be said to discover that all of its principles for



validating knowledge are what they are because they are posits of consciousness itself. It thus knows that there are no principles independent of its experience that might serve to validate knowledge as knowledge for consciousness. The state of absolute knowledge is accordingly the state in which consciousness as consciousness may be said to be absolved from any claim to know any determinate idea whatsoever. Therewith the "natural idea" is eliminated. That, in briefest outline, is why Hegel's *Phenomenology* may be read as an introduction to his *Science of Logic*. To begin, this logic requires the absence of any determinate idea with a claim to conceptual significance. The *Phenomenology* brings about this state of affairs by an analysis of consciousness as an epistemic positor.

The key to such an interpretation of the relationship between phenomenology and systematic philosophy is to see that phenomenology does, whereas systematic philosophy does not, presuppose a determinate idea. Furthermore, the determinate idea presupposed by the *Phenomenology* must be the one whose elimination eliminates all determinate ideas whatsoever. What, then, is this determinate idea presupposed by the *Phenomenology*? In one word, it is consciousness. And what is the determinacy of this idea? It is the elementary content of consciousness, the abstract determinations, knowledge and truth. All consciousness is consciousness of something. To be conscious is to have something for consciousness, to have a theme, to have an intentional object. Knowing consciousness therefore has the determinacy of a relation. And the determinate aspect of this relation is called knowledge. But consciousness also knows its knowledge to be *for it*, its theme, its intentional object. What does this mean? Put most simply it means that what is for consciousness, namely knowledge, is for it precisely because it is *not in itself*. But to draw this contrast between what is for it and what is in itself, consciousness, in its most elementary structure, must posit the determination of being-in-itself. This being-in-itself, the necessary correlative of knowing consciousness, is what Hegel calls its moment of truth. On his analysis, then, truth, the moment by contrast with which consciousness as knowing consciousness has an object for it, is seen to be a posit by consciousness.

This, then, is the natural idea of modern philosophy. It is also the determinate structure of consciousness that is presupposed by the *Phenomenology*. And because it is presupposed, the *Phenomenology* is not a science *in stricto sensu*, i.e., in the sense of systematic philosophy. In fact, this is a structure that, taken as the fundamental structure of knowing, rules out the possibility of any genuine science. Scientific knowledge cannot explicitly acknowledge the idea of truth as a mere posit.

Still, the *Phenomenology* does presuppose or preposit this oppositional structure of consciousness as the determinate idea constituting its subject



matter. And with such a subject matter it might seem that the *Phenomenology* could lead only to a radicalization of the skepticism implicit in the structure of consciousness, to that unmasking of truth as a posit explicitly affirmed by Nietzsche and implicitly acknowledged by the genial nihilism of contemporary intellectuals. Such, for example, is Jürgen Habermas's reading of the *Phenomenology*.<sup>3</sup>

But Hegel's analysis of consciousness has a dynamic as well as a merely structural dimension. Precisely because consciousness' idea of truth is a posit, it is also susceptible of being discovered *as* a posit. But because it is a necessary posit—even for the most avowedly skeptical consciousness—it constitutes the horizon within which any posit is thematized as a posit or discovered to be a posit. This horizontal dimension of consciousness is captured by Hegel through the use of a grammatical distinction that is introduced in the beginning of the *Phenomenology* and sustained until the end. It is, namely, the distinction between the dative and the accusative, a distinction between what is “to” consciousness and what is “for” it.<sup>4</sup>

But the difference between the in-itself and the for-itself is already present in the very fact that consciousness knows an object at all. Something is to it (*ihm*) the in-itself, but the knowledge or the being of the object for consciousness (*für das Bewusstsein*) is to it still another moment.<sup>5</sup>

To summarize Hegel's second principal observation about the determinacy of the natural idea in the *Phenomenology*: Consciousness is not and cannot be regarded as determinate simply by virtue of the abstract contrast between what is *for it* and what is correlatively posited as *in itself*. The abstract form of consciousness always has a determinate shape (*Gestalt*). And any given shape of consciousness is what it is by virtue of the specific horizon in which it makes thematic its objects of knowledge. In any given shape, this is what is *to it*, i.e., prethematic. But because its prethematic horizon, its dative dimension, is susceptible to being made thematic, the abstract form of consciousness can undergo a sequence of transformations by which it “widens” its horizon. We can follow this development by considering the progressively broader dimension assumed by the dative dimension throughout the *Phenomenology*. (Unfortunately, the dative/accusative distinction is not preserved in either of the complete translations published in English.) Thus we can also grasp how, in principle at least, the *Phenomenology* might have an immanent conclusion. It would be that shape in which consciousness comes to thematize a horizon that it had developed to the point of totality. Then, one might say, its horizon will have “exploded” and the distinction between the dative and the accusative dimensions, the in-itself and the for-consciousness, will have been eliminated. Such, in any

case, is my reading of that elimination of the "opposition of consciousness," which Hegel stresses in his *Science of Logic* as the result of *The Phenomenology of Spirit*.

## DETERMINACY

The logic then proceeds to generate the elementary categories of thought. To consider a category as a category, without any reference to a putatively legitimating structure in the real world, Hegelian logic must be liberated from metaphysics. This is achieved by a critique of the natural idea, the definitive structure of consciousness within the *Phenomenology*. It is, on the other hand, the explicit theoretical task of Hegel's logic to make all aspects of determinacy conceptually transparent.

As already indicated, this logic begins not with an account of determinacies as determined but with determinacy as determinate within a situation of contrast. The logic of contrastive determinacy begins with a consideration of the indeterminate, the negative result of the *Phenomenology*. Upon consideration, the indeterminate exhibits itself in the forms of being and nothing. As pure thought forms, being and nothing are both without qualification; they are both indeterminate. Yet they are thought as different. Hence the first contrast in Hegel's logic of contrastive determinacy, a contrast through which the very concept of determinacy may be thought to arise.

The logic of contrastive determinacy is a study of all the elementary forms in which something that is otherwise indeterminate may be thought of as determinate by virtue of, and solely by virtue of, its standing in contrast with something other than it.

In this logic, to be  $x$  is therefore to be *non-y*. The whole logic of contrastive determinacy is a spelling out of the ways in which determinacy can be thought, not by reference to determinate structures in reality (this is the formula of metaphysics), but by contrast with other determinacies in question, say,  $y$ . It will be clear that in this logic no determinacy can be thought as independent of all others. But neither can they be said to stand in a relation of dependency. They are what they are in and through their otherness; there is here no difference of logical order whereby any determinacy could be thought independent of or dependent upon another.

This logic is said to give a complete account of the categories of contrastive determinacy because the first contrast is generated out of the indeterminate, and because the sequence of the categories generated leads immanently to a way of thinking determinacy that is not contrastive.

The second way of thinking determinacy is the logic of determination,

the logic in terms of which an  $x$  is thought determinate by virtue of its being determined or posited by its other. The distinguishing characteristic of this logic is differentiation into two logical orders. It is, we may say, a two-tiered logic. In some respects it bears a resemblance to the ordinary logical distinction between a meta-language and an object language. The one order refers to the other. And it is by virtue of this reference that the referents are said to be what they are. In other words, their determinacy is said to derive exclusively from their being determined or posited.

Hegel calls this way of thinking determinacy the logic of essence. The term *essence* designates the logical order that is superordinated to the order of posited determinacies just because the determinacies in question are thought as posits or determinations. This logic is thus said to provide the conceptual framework for our thinking relations such as that between essence and appearance or between cause and effect. The critical point, however, here and elsewhere in Hegel's logic, is that the categories or structures of thought generated are not thought by abstraction from, say, cause-and-effect relations in the real world. The contention is rather that we make sense of relations in the real world by ordinary thinking and that we can make sense of thinking by reconstructing the categories of thought independently of any reference to reality. This is another way of saying that the logic is wholly nonmetaphysical. The logic of determinations treats determinate thought structures as what they are solely by virtue of their being determined. But Hegel's is a *pure* theory of positing because it considers nothing but the ways by which any  $x$  can be thought to be what it is exclusively in terms of its being posited, established, or determined. Here nothing is presupposed about the determiner that does not pertain to its logical role as a determiner of  $x$ , and nothing can be thought about  $x$  that is not accountable in terms of its being determined. Hence there can be no talk about God or about human agents, about divine or human commands, as the primitive forms of posits when posits are conceived logically. Such talk would presuppose or posit prelogically a determinacy of the positor that, *ex hypothesi*, could not be accounted for by the logic of determination alone. But these very preposits are inevitably made by philosophers of the natural idea, philosophers unschooled by the *Phenomenology*.

The third way of thinking determinacy in Hegel's logic is what I have called the logic of determinate individuality. In this sphere the specific topic is the conceptual framework in which we think of any  $x$  as an individual (*ein Einzelnes*). Although it is thoroughly misleading to think of the first two parts of the logic as anything like a thesis and an antithesis, there is an important sense in which the logic of determinant individuality constitutes a synthesis of the previous two spheres. Neither contrast nor determination provides frameworks for thinking anything determinate as a determinate

individual. That is their defect. Each accounts only for the conceptual resources in terms of which we think "moments" (*Momente*) or logical aspects of a determinate individual. Nevertheless, these moments are the moments of individuality. Specifically thought as moments, as they are thought in the logic of determinate individuality, they are called the moments of universality and particularity (*das Allgemeine und das Besondere*). Thought as determinate by virtue of contrast alone, an  $x$  is ultimately thought to be at one with that by contrast with which it was thought a determinate  $x$ . It comes to be thought as a universal. I illustrate this by the case of legal persons in the following section. On the other hand, if  $x$  is thought as determinate by virtue of determination alone, then it is ultimately thought in terms of its bare positivity, a determination without any logical connection with any other. It comes to be thought as a bare particular. In the next section I draw on Hegel's theory of the moral subject for an illustration of this.

The main lesson of the logics of contrast and determination, a lesson drawn in the logic of individuality, is that they are each necessary but insufficient conditions for the thought of a determinate individual. Each must be thought as a necessary moment of thinking individuality, but both must be thought together if individuality is to be comprehended. I illustrate this in the next section by reference to Hegel's argument that legal persons and moral subjects are only thinkable as individuals when they are thought as family members, participants in civil society, and citizens of a state.

## THE PHILOSOPHY OF OBJECTIVE SPIRIT

The formal structure of Hegel's philosophy of Objective Spirit does not differ from the formal structure of any of the other five major parts of his *Realphilosophie*.<sup>6</sup> Each of these is a consideration of structures in the domain external to logic (*die Äusserlichkeit*), and in each case the real structure is an illustration of a formal logical structure. It is never the case that the structures may be said to be derived or abstracted from reality. That, once again, would be metaphysics.

What is distinctive about the philosophy of objective Spirit is that it concerns the domain of human selves in the state of plurality or as interacting with one another. This is, of course, the same domain that is treated by philosophers of history. To forestall a possible misunderstanding of my interpretation I wish to stress that the argument in Hegel's philosophy of objective Spirit is totally alien from any philosophy of history. The guiding framework for his analysis is an atemporal logic, and no essentially chronological model of development.<sup>7</sup>

The three main parts of the philosophy of objective spirit correspond, respectively, to the logics of contrast, of determination, and of individuality. These are the parts entitled Abstract Law, Morality, and Ethical Life. As in the case of logic *per se*, the first two spheres exhibit themselves as moments, each of which, taken by itself, is aporetic; but both, when articulated as moments and thought in the conceptual framework of the third sphere, show themselves to be necessary moments.

In the first of these spheres, Abstract Law or Legality, the factor whose determinacy is under discussion is called the person. The first thing that must be said about persons is that they are determinate or actual persons only in so far as they stand in a situation of contrast with other persons. That is to say, the logic by which they have their determinacy is the logic of contrast. As contrastive factors in a domain external to the logical system, however, the contrast cannot be regarded as a purely logical one. It must be mediated. The factor that is said to mediate the contrast between persons is called property. The contrast of persons mediated by property is called recognition. Thus it is Hegel's most elementary teaching about persons that they are what they are by standing in a contrastive relationship to other persons, by being recognized. The sphere of legality is accordingly the sphere of recognition (*Anerkanntsein*), and the safest generalization about Hegel's concept of legality is that it is the structure of reciprocal recognition.

Perhaps the most important feature of Hegel's treatment of legality in terms of his logic of contrastive determinacy is that this treatment, by virtue of the logic alone, requires that persons be considered determinate exclusively in and through their contrast with other persons. The logic would be inapplicable to any legal situation in which a person were considered first with reference to some determinate status—slave or free, male or female, white or black. This means that Hegel's legal theory would not be pertinent to any legal system that did not acknowledge the principle of personal equality. And note that his aspect of the theory has nothing to do with Hegel's moral attitude on the question of equality: It follows from his logic alone. Moreover, as far as the logic of the theory is concerned, it must be regarded as a pure contingency that a real political institution in Europe had acknowledged and declared the equality of persons as a fundamental principle. Here again we see that a systematic reading of Hegel rules out any recourse to a philosophy of history.

Hegel's presentation of abstract legality is divided into three sections: property, which we have already touched upon; contract; and wrong. It is in the second of these that the principle of contrast via recognition is made most evident. For a contract is, in the most basic sense, an exchange of property, and property is any aspect of a determinate personality that is susceptible to exchange. The contract, then, is that operation by which the

contrast, and hence the determinacy, of persons is most intelligible. To engage in a contractual exchange of property is to engage in a process of recognition.

This process is described in two stages: the stipulation and the performance. In the first, the quantitative equality of the properties to be exchanged is posited and the formal character of the actual exchange is anticipated. In the performance some of the determinate factors that had defined the two (or more) persons are transferred one to the other and the fluidity of personal determinacy via contrastive recognition is once again affirmed. The basic legal right of persons in this theory is not the right to any determinate thing or kind of things (e.g., not even to such basics as food, clothing, or shelter). The self as person is not the self in need (this is a topic of civil society). The legal right of persons is the right to be determinate, the right to stand in determinate contrast with other persons, or, in short, the right to be recognized.

The third subsection of Abstract Legality is wrong. The possibility of wrong derives in the first instance from the distinction between stipulation and performance in contract. The specific contrast as stipulated formally and the contrast as actualized in the performance may be out of agreement with one another. If this happens accidentally it is called a nonmalicious wrong; if by design it is called fraud. In either case it is not an eventuality against which there are any protective resources in the sphere of abstract legality. Or, as Hegel put the matter: "abstract legality is always at the mercy of wrong."

In its most extreme form wrong is crime. Here a person is denied his personality. The entire structure of reciprocal recognition, the legal form of contrastive determinacy, is simply negated. The perpetrator of such an act, the criminal, thereby loses his or her determinate place in the structure of legal contrast; in other words, the criminal act is a sacrifice of personality.

Still, the criminal as criminal is not without his or her rights. These are not legal rights, for legality is at the service of personality alone. But to be a person is to be something universal, it is to be in a mode of determinacy that, when carried to its limit, eliminates the determinacy of the selves in question, whereas the criminal act is an act of determination in a sphere of contrastive determinacy. It is wrong because it involves a conflict of spheres; it is right because the sphere of legality, like its counterpart in pure logic, is aporetic or systematically incomplete. The significance of abstract legality is to be a moment of a systematic whole.

The sphere within which the self-determination of the self is the proper way of determinacy is the sphere of morality. This self is the moral subject. In morality the subject is what it is by virtue of its own posits. These posits also take the form of acts in the face of others. But when we consider action



as moral action, i.e., in terms of the logic of determination, then its social dimension is accountable only by way of the agent's subjective meaning. Thus Hegel's concept of *moral* action is parallel to Max Weber's better known definition of *social* action. According to Weber:

Action is "social" insofar as its subjective meaning takes into account the behavior of others and is thereby oriented in its course.<sup>8</sup>

The moral subject is essentially an agent. By its acts it is what it is. But even more essentially the moral subject determines the objective principles by which its acts are validated. At the first stage of moral reasoning this simply amounts to drawing a line between what the subject does willy nilly and what it acknowledges to have done on purpose. The subject accepts responsibility for what, by its own determination, it has done on purpose. At the second stage of moral reasoning the subject takes responsibility for determining its intentions in such a way that its actions will be objectively valid. But still it is the subject alone that can determine the validity of its own intentions. In the third stage of morality the final implications of its logic of determination are put on display. What is here determined or posited is not merely the action, its purpose and its objective intention, but also the principle(s) by which *all* moral validation can be thought. This extreme form of moral subjectivity, which Hegel calls "conscience," is obliged, by the logic of moral discourse, the logic of positing, to determine "the good." At the previous stage the determinations or posits of the subject were made with some reference to a putatively objective framework, e.g., a natural law. But at this stage the logic of moral self-determination requires that the objective framework itself be posited. When this is made a subjective posit, there is no longer any moral basis for the subject's claim to a distinction between subjectivity and objectivity. As an ultimate moral posit, the good is no more logically necessary than evil.

Thus on Hegel's account neither legality nor morality can be regarded as complete frameworks for a comprehension of selves in the situation of plurality. But both are necessary moments, and any adequate theory will have to incorporate their respective logics.

Under the title "Ethical Life" (*Sittlichkeit*) Hegel claims to have formulated such an adequate theory. The point of this theory is not to deny the significance of legality and morality. Indeed, the concept of Ethical Life would make no sense in abstraction from the two previous moments of Hegel's philosophy of objective Spirit, just as his logic of determinate individuality makes no sense in abstraction from the logics of contrast and determination.

It is, I believe, a distinguishing characteristic of Ethical Life in systematic philosophy that the self is comprehended as individual by virtue of its



participation in each of three modalities of life in plurality. The respective modalities are the familial, the societal, and the political. Each of these brings to prominence one of the three moments of the concept: universality, particularity, and individuality. As a family member the ethical self is conceived to be universal because the family is one person (*Eine Person*),<sup>9</sup> and the member is a member through an immediate sentiment, the unity of love. As a member of civil society the ethical self is conceived under the aspect of particularity—the self is determinate by virtue of the particular interests that it posits, but which it posits in a structure of interaction (e.g., the world market) that extends in principle to all other ethical selves. Each particular self is therefore seen to participate in one real structure that, unlike the real family, is the same for all: Civil society is global. Finally, as political, the ethical self is an individual through loyalty to a nation-state that is, at the same time, a modern constitutional state, an institution whose legitimacy consists in upholding the universal principles of justice (the constitution) within the territory and traditions of a particular people. Finding its identity in the modern state, the ethical self can be “at home” with others who share not only a particular culture but also a common commitment to a rationally universal organization of authority (the structure of legality and action presented in the philosophy of objective Spirit as a whole).

We can begin to see the specific character of a systematic and nonmetaphysical concept of ethical life when we compare it with that notion of ethical life that emerges as a shape of consciousness in Chapter 6 of the *Phenomenology*. Ethical life from the standpoint of consciousness is, like every shape of consciousness, constituted by a twofold opposition. Whereas ethical life in systematic philosophy exhibits the trimodal structure of the concept, ethical life in phenomenology is bimodal, incomplete and self-destroying. The two orders, you will recall, are the public and the private realms, the domains of human and divine law, the members of which were essentially male or female.

Consider how the self is determinately individual in these respective types of ethical life. In the phenomenological type each self is assigned to one of the two orders primarily in terms of a natural determinacy, in terms of a factor determined in reality from the standpoint of consciousness. This factor is sex. If the self is female, its dominant ethical realm is private, the family; if male, its proper realm is public, the political order. In either case a resolute action must be tragic. The ethical individual acting with a claim to objective validity is doomed to essential conflict.

By contrast, the three spheres of ethical life in systematic philosophy are not spheres to which a self is assigned by virtue of some determinacy derived from reality. It is rather the case that the self becomes determinate

by participation in each of the three spheres discovered in reality according to the structure of the concept.

Of course it is true that these three spheres of ethical life, like the concepts of the legal person and the moral subject, could not have been discovered in reality prior to the emergence of the modern world. But what Hegel calls *die Neuzeit*, modernity, will remain incomprehensible so long as we take our subject matter to be history. Our categories for a comprehension of modernity, the structure articulated under the title objective Spirit, are not generated in history but in pure logic, a logic made pure by a phenomenological elimination of the natural idea and a logic whose structure guides our discovery of those dimensions of reality that happen to be comprehensible. As a part of systematic philosophy, the science of spirit, like the science of nature, cannot "turn back to that reality which consciousness gave up" in phenomenology.<sup>10</sup> On the other hand, systematic philosophy is systematic only if the *Phenomenology* has uncovered *all* the shapes in which consciousness can make a claim to know reality.<sup>11</sup>

## NOTES

1. "Hegel's 'Deduction of the Concept of Science'." To appear in Hegel and the Sciences (Boston Studies in the Philosophy of Science, Vol. XXXIV), D. Reidel.
2. "The Relationship of Habermas's Views to Hegel" in *Hegel's Social and Political Thought*, ed. D. P. Verene (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1980), pp. 240–46.
3. *Knowledge and Human Interests*, trans. Jeremy Shapiro (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), Chap. 1.
4. Despite Hegel's disavowal (*Wissenschaft der Logik* [WL], I, 7n/29n), readers are sometimes tempted to an interpretation of the *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (PhG) as part of Hegel's system because the term *phenomenology* is used to describe the second section of the philosophy of Subjective Spirit (*Enzyklopädie der Philosophischen Wissenschaften* [Enz.], 413–29). Hegel had good reason to take up phenomenology as a stage of subjective spirit (paralleled by the stages of morality and religion in the second and third parts of the philosophy of Spirit). But despite similarities of subject matter, the methods followed in the PhG and in the phenomenology are radically different. A major clue to this difference is that the PhG does, whereas the phenomenology does not, exploit the dative/accusative distinction as its motive principle.
5. PhG, 72/54, my translation, as published in Martin Heidegger, *Hegel's Concept of Experience* (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), p. 22. I first called attention to the significance of Hegel's distinction between the dative and accusative dimensions in "Die Epoché der Phänomenologie des Geistes," in *Stuttgarter Hegel-Tage 1970*, ed., H.-G. Gadamer (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag, 1974), pp. 605–21. For subsequent discussion see Klaus Hartmann, ed., *Die ontologische Option* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1976), pp. 233, 261.
6. The six major parts of the *Realphilosophie* are: Mechanics, Physics, Organic

Physics, Subjective Spirit, Objective Spirit, and Absolute Spirit. Note that the philosophy of Subjective Spirit contains a theory of consciousness under the title "Phenomenology." This theory is a part of systematic philosophy and is not to be confused with the PhG, which contains a critique, not a theory, of consciousness. See note 4 above.

7. Hegel as the philosopher of history is a Young Hegelian invention. The famous proposition, *Philosophie ist ihre Zeit, in Gedanken erfasst*, served Bruno Bauer, the young Marx, and others as a carte blanche for wide-ranging speculations about cultures and epochs. In the meantime such intellectual exercises have become an industry so entrenched in our landscape that the traditional appeal to Hegel would no longer be helpful or even intelligible. Thus it is left for intellectual historians to point out that our historico-cultural sensibilities derive ultimately from Hegel. But they carry matters too far. Though a large number of his immediate followers were drunk with history, Hegel's published works are filled with harsh critiques of historical explanation and influence hunting. For sober assessments of the Young Hegelians see the various writings of Rüdiger Bubner, especially "Philosophie ist ihre Zeit, in Gedanken erfasst," in *Hermeneutik und Dialektik*, ed. R. Bubner (Tübingen: Mohr (Siebeck); 1970), II, 317–42. This is the Gadamer *Festschrift*.
8. *Economy and Society*, eds. G. Roth and C. Wittich (New York: Bedminster Press, 1968), p. 4.
9. *Enz.*, 519–20, 523.
10. *WL*, II, 231/592.
11. It is of course an open question whether systematic philosophy is possible within our intellectual milieu. We are all aware of numerous attempts to resurrect systematic philosophy in the form of some historically famous "system." Of course Hegel's system is not immune to such exploitation. But in this essay I have attempted to show how a reading of Hegel that distinguishes radically between the PhG and the system enables one to see that coming to terms with our ant systematic intellectual milieu is the precondition for any rational discourse about systematic philosophy. For students of Hegel, however, the task proposed is doubly difficult because many of our most sophisticated contemporaries have become accustomed to regarding Hegel as a major source rather than as the diagnostician of the epistemological nihilism that we inhale and exhale on a daily basis.

# THE GOLGOTHA OF ABSOLUTE SPIRIT

Stephen Crites

Hegel's *Phenomenology* ends in a stormy and stressful eruption of images, a Bacchanalian revel indeed, among which we find, in the very last sentence, the image that provides the title for the present essay. Spirit has arrived at absolute knowledge of itself as spirit by way of a path winding among lesser spirits of many different sorts. These lesser spirits are preserved in their contingent appearance in history. Comprehended philosophically they are preserved as a science of phenomenal knowledge, which is the subject of the *Phenomenology*. The two together, history and this science, make up a conceptualized history, which, according to Hegel,

form(s) the recollection and the Golgotha of the absolute spirit, the actuality, truth and certainty of its throne, without which it would be lifeless and solitary.<sup>1</sup>

Golgotha, the place of the skull (*Schädelstätte*) on which the incarnate God died, appears in this passage as one image of phenomenologically comprehended history.

This conclusion reminds us of another burst of images in the introduction, where this phenomenology is described variously as the path of doubt and of despair, as a kind of *Bildungsroman* of consciousness, and also as

the way of the Soul which journeys through the series of its own configurations as though they were the stations appointed for it by its own nature, so that it may purify itself for the life of the Spirit.<sup>2</sup>

It seems likely, as A. V. Miller suggests in a note to this passage, that Hegel has in mind the Stations of the Cross, so that this passage in the introduction is linked to the conclusion by the suggestion that Hegel's *Phenomenology* is, among other things, a *via dolorosa*, indeed a kind of crucifixion.

This suggestion is extraordinary both for what it implies about the *Phenomenology* and for what it implies about the central event of the Christian drama. This association is no momentary fancy in Hegel's mind. Five years earlier he had employed a strikingly similar figure of speech in

concluding the essay on believing and knowing, *Glauben und Wissen*: Hegel had announced a "speculative Good Friday" for Kantian and post-Kantian *Reflexionsphilosophie* and, by extension, for all the dualistic oppositions by which consciousness is riven—moral, religious, theoretical, and cultural.

This essay, really a monograph constituting a whole issue of the Schelling-Hegel *Critical Journal of Philosophy*, is informed by a particular conception of philosophical criticism, which, in general, it was the program of the journal to embody. The prime target of this program of criticism was dualism in all its forms. The basic standpoint of the program was the Schellingian Philosophy of Identity. But the conception of such an anti-dualistic program of criticism, and the need for it as a propaedeutic to a nondualistic system of philosophy, survived in Hegel's thinking even after he had abandoned Schellingian monism to the nocturnal cows. This critical conception, according to which consciousness is moved positively toward the truth through the negation of its own inadequate viewpoints, was what came to fruition in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Hegel came to Jena in 1801 determined to develop a system, and devoted himself relentlessly to that task throughout his Jena years, composing and abandoning several substantial manuscripts in the process. But always he insisted on the need for a negative propaedeutic as a pathway of consciousness into systematic truth. In the early Jena years what he then called Logic was to serve this function, but so, in a different form, did his critical essays. *Glauben und Wissen*, for instance, criticizes Kant, Jacobi, and Fichte for introducing, each in his own way, a fundamental dualism between believing and knowing, and for confining knowledge to a very limited sphere that has nothing to do with the deeper needs of the human spirit, while relegating the absolute that answers these needs to an inaccessible "beyond" (*Jenseits*), which is then supposed to be the object of faith. In the conclusion to the essay, Hegel suggests that these three systems have exhausted, in principle, the possible forms of this particular philosophical error, preparing the way for a true philosophy that has both profited from what is sound in them and arisen directly out of the disclosure of their errors.<sup>3</sup> Hegel expresses this insight in the dark language of Böhman mysticism: Critical thought is "infinitude and the negative side of the Absolute," annihilating the dualities and finitudes of mere reflection. But "out of this nothingness and pure night of infinitude the truth rises up as out of the secret abyss that is its birthplace."<sup>4</sup> The truth is not incremental, putting together facts and bits of insight. It is a seamless totality that arises from the negation of finitude and partial insight.

Hegel expresses this visionary sense of death and transfiguration in the final sentence of the essay, one of those unbearably long and dense culminating sentences in which he tries to say everything at once. Cerf and Harris, in their translation, have sensibly broken it up into several short

sentences, but it will serve our purpose to take it as it is, as a single connected statement, on which we will comment bit by bit:<sup>5</sup>

But the pure Concept or the infinitude as the abyss of nothingness into which all being sinks must designate the infinite pain . . . purely as a moment, but also as no more than a moment of the highest Idea . . .

This first part of the sentence, leaving out a passage to which we will return, establishes a relation between Concept (*Begriff*) and Idea as Hegel understood the terms at that time. "The Pure Concept," the subject of the whole sentence, must not be confused with the synthesizing and consummating sense he invested in the term later. Here it signifies what he has just called "the negative side of the Absolute," really the negating side. The Idea is what contains both sides: Positively it is transcendental intuition, the ineffable *Indifferenzpunkt* (of the Schellingian Philosophy of Identity), which unites all opposites. But it therefore negates all fixed oppositions as such, and the Concept articulates this negative dialectic.<sup>6</sup> The "infinite pain" suffered in the dissolution of "all being" is exacted by the Concept itself. Yet in negating all that is (Hegel uses the Böhman expression, *Abgrund des Nichts*), the Concept also establishes the pain of that negation as a moment of the Idea.

Hegel does not yet clearly invoke historical development to give actual content to this negation. But the passage we left out takes an important step in that direction, associating the pain with something rather more identifiable than its infinity:

. . . the infinite pain,—that earlier was only historically in the culture, and as the feeling on which the religion of modern times is based, the feeling: God himself is dead (the same feeling that was, as it were, only empirically articulated in Pascal's expression: "Nature is such that it signifies everywhere a lost God both within and outside man."),—purely as a moment, but . . .

The feeling that God is dead has made its appearance as a cultural event. Here, however, we are not dealing directly with a crisis of civilization and its tradition, neither with the sense of abandonment to the Pascalian silences of the universe, nor with the outrage against an authoritarian image that Hegel himself had so eloquently expressed in Bern and Frankfurt, but with the logically necessary negation of even the highest being by the pure concept. No particular object, whether of experience or of thought or of belief, can be considered a substantial entity, subsisting in itself, once it is recognized as an aspect of the totality that the Concept expresses negatively against all finitude. Even the most sublime being turns out, in its very distinction from other beings (i.e., temporal, contingent entities), to be finite after all, and this finitude consigns it to the abyss of nothingness.

A few years later, in his systematic manuscript of 1804–05, Hegel discussed the triad consisting of soul, world, and highest being, under the rubric of “Objective Metaphysics.” Its untruth consists precisely in the fact that it is a metaphysic of objects, utterly distinct from one another. World, soul, and highest being are each regarded as independent and irreducible realities. None of the three can pass over into the others, nor can they together make up an integrated totality. In speaking of highest being, one wishes to express a kind of being that transcends all limited, particular things; but the highest being “is itself particular,” a limited existence precisely by the way it transcends everything else, by its separateness. It can be conceived as “absolute being” only insofar as “this negative particularity” is itself transcended, i.e., insofar as it is no longer conceived as highest being.<sup>7</sup> Hegel has something similar in mind when he refers to the death of God as a conceptual negation in the conclusion to *Glauben und Wissen*.

So, returning to that text, the point is metaphysical, not cultural. Yet this particular manifestation of the infinite pain is not chosen at random. The Concept confirms in an absolute sense the feeling that had developed culturally, that God is dead. The Concept, furthermore, describes this infinite pain, of which the death of God is the instance par excellence,

. . . purely as a moment, but also as no more than a moment of the highest Idea, and so must give a philosophical existence to what was perhaps either a moral prescription for the sacrificing of empirical being or the concept of formal abstraction, and therefore must restore to philosophy the idea of absolute freedom . . .

Formal (*formell*) abstraction is the logical reduction of the particular to the generic; morally one must sometimes be prepared to sacrifice one’s own empirical being in a higher cause. Both are limited forms of negation relevant to this absolute negation, to its theoretical and its practical side, respectively; but the pure Concept makes negation an all-embracing speculative principle. Unconfined by any fixed objects or inviolable logical constraints, the otherwise unrealizable and even unimaginable idea of an absolute freedom thus becomes philosophically coherent, as a self-existence that is both unrestricted and fully complete—but only as another expression for the infinite pain. The Concept

. . . therefore must restore to philosophy the idea of absolute freedom and with it the absolute suffering or the speculative Good Friday, that was otherwise historical, and must restore it even in the full truth and hardness of its Godlessness . . .

The death of God, after all, has another aspect: not merely the aggressive atheism or the reluctant bereavement that has characterized the modern age,



but also the central image of traditional Christianity, placed on every altar in Christendom. The horrendous notion that God himself has died on the cross, which has been obscured by harmless conventional renderings of the story, is here restored not merely as a historical event but as a supreme speculative insight restored in all its original force and pitiless severity: We are left without God, godless or godforsaken like Christ on the cross. Philosophy—become properly speculative—has suffered the loss of everything, and precisely in its disillusionment and austerity enjoys an absolute freedom.

For the Concept that annihilates gives way to a surprising inversion; it reminds us that the infinite pain of its negativity was after all “no more than a moment” of the Idea: The Concept gives philosophy its Good Friday, a speculative one to be sure, but suffered

. . . in the full truth and hardness of its Godlessness, out of which hardness alone,—for the more serene, superficial, and ideosyncratic of the dogmatic philosophies must disappear along with the nature-religions—the highest totality can and must be resurrected in its utter seriousness and out of its deepest ground, encompassing everything at once, and in the most serene freedom of its form.

Well, after Good Friday comes Easter; that is the Gospel. But it has here been transmuted into a story of the most uncommon sort, a timeless narrative enacted altogether within the idea, its moments marking not events in a process but a dialectical sequence within an unchanging whole. The appearance of this totality as mere composite of finite oppositions, real and ideal, is negated in order that everything may reappear in its truth. Yet the “absolute freedom” or the “most serene freedom” in which this totality is resurrected is not merely the outcome of one of those serenely optimistic philosophies that show how the universe turns out fortunately despite its drawbacks, nor that of the nature religions with their springtime rebirth following winter desolation; these philosophies and religions must disappear because the logical and empirical premises of both have already disappeared in the great negation, the “speculative Good Friday.” Nor can there be any such freedom for consciousness caught, in the manner of modern subjectivism, in opposition to its objects. Indeed, the terms of every dualism are mutually confining, precisely by the opposition of each to the other. So the freedom of which Hegel speaks consists of the single, unconfined totality that arises out of the negation of all oppositions. Formal dualities are replaced by the “serene freedom” of the “form” of totality. What has been crucified, in short, is resurrected in the form of the ineffable identity Hegel espoused as speculative truth at that time.

The very same use of the crucifixion image reappears in the conclusion of

the *Phenomenology*. The great difference that had occurred in Hegel's thinking in the intervening five years was that the ineffable identity had been consigned to bovine darkness; the totality to be resurrected had to be fully articulated in a system. The crucifixion of all finite, dualistic forms had also to be articulated, station by station, in the immanent, "determinate" negation of phenomenology. But the basic reference of the crucifixion metaphor remains intact, for it is consonant with the way Hegel had come to understand the significance of the Gospel itself. Whenever Christianity turns up in the Jena writings, including the *Phenomenology* itself, the Gospel is seen as the supreme religious representation of negativity. It both reflects the estrangement of the desolated cultural conditions in which it arose and flourished, and is the supreme religious negation of those conditions. To be consistent it would therefore have to negate itself as well, which in a way it does.

For instance, in the so-called lecture manuscript on natural law,<sup>8</sup> which probably dates from the same period as *Glauben und Wissen*, there is a presentation of religious development that to a remarkable degree anticipates in simpler form the chapter on religion in the *Phenomenology*. The imaginative pantheism of the Greek "religion of nature" gives way, together with the ethical life (*Sittlichkeit*) of its *Volksgeist*, when submitted to the pulverizing force of Roman rule. Out of "this fragmentation that found no reconciliation" and "this universality that had no life," in the aridity of this Roman "boredom of the world," spirit had to take refuge in an "original identity" denuded of both nature and *Volk* but elevated "in its eternal power" over the Roman wasteland. This abstract refuge of spirit was the high God of Jewish monotheism, transcending both human life and this "world which had ceased to be nature."<sup>9</sup> The reconciliation of the divine and the human accomplished by Christianity could not embrace nature or the ethical *Volk*, but could incorporate only the abstracted polar opposites thrown up by their collapse. Christ

expressed the suffering of his age, which had become unfaithful to nature, in his absolute contempt toward that world into which nature had degenerated [*zur Welt gewordenen Natur*], and expressed the absolute assurance of reconciliation in the certainty that he was at one with God.—The contempt that he expressed against the world had necessarily to be revenged upon him as his fate through death; and precisely this *death* had to justify the contempt for the world and make it into a fixed point.<sup>10</sup>

Branded an outcast by the state and done to death as a common criminal, Christ bears the "infinite pain" that had become the universal human condition. "This single human figure expresses in *his* history the *entire*

history of . . . the human race. . . . But he expresses this history only because it is at the same time God's."<sup>11</sup> His being "at one with God" signifies simply that God comes to share the same pain that unites all humankind. For

. . . he who died on the cross is at the same time the God of this religion and as such his history expresses the infinite pain of the godforsaken nature. The divine was plunged into the *sordidness of life, the divine itself had died*. The thought that God was dead upon the earth could alone express the feeling of this infinite pain: so too his reconciliation, that he is resurrected from the grave. Through his life and death God is degraded, through his resurrection the human becomes deified.<sup>12</sup>

But this deified life, still estranged from the whole natural and cultural world, simply anticipates, in the terms of this document, the doleful dialectic of the unhappy consciousness in Hegel's *Phenomenology*. We shall not follow Hegel into that analysis here, but enough has been said to illustrate the overriding importance that the essential drama of the dying and rising God-man had assumed in Hegel's understanding of the significance of Christianity. The conclusion of *Glauben und Wissen*, furthermore, illustrates the form in which it was incorporated into Hegel's own dialectic. The pattern of images, in fact, is strikingly similar in the two documents: the "infinite pain" of universal negation expressed in the feeling that God is dead, that he was crucified in order to make way for the resurrection of a new divine-human totality. There the pattern gave expression to both speculative truth and, incidentally, the culture of modern times. Here it is the meaning of the Christian religion. The essential Christian mythos contains what Hegel was to call (again in a closely related context in the preface to the *Phenomenology*) "the tremendous power of the negative."<sup>13</sup> For this mythos negates even when it affirms.

In fact, Hegel closed the lecture manuscript on natural law, to which we have been referring, by calling for a new religion that would move beyond the inherent negativity of Christianity. The new religion would reflect the rebirth of ethical solidarity in a free people, and would be informed by philosophical knowledge, which provides the "magic word" that overcomes "the entire energy of suffering and of opposition that has dominated the world and all the forms of its civilization for a few thousand years."<sup>14</sup> The *Critical Journal*, too, issued a public call for a new religion wedded to philosophy.<sup>15</sup>

But we hear no more about a new religion in later Jena manuscripts, and in the *Realphilosophie* of 1805-06, written concurrently with the *Phenomenology*, Hegel is already referring to Christianity as the absolute religion.<sup>16</sup>

This apparent elevation of Christianity to the position of a religion beyond which no higher is possible does not imply that Hegel no longer identified it with negativity. Quite the contrary: Christianity is the absolute religion precisely because it serves the incarnate and crucified God of the great negation. In the terms of the *Phenomenology*, Christianity is the revealed religion because it embodies the speculative knowledge of what God is in himself. Speculative knowledge knows God

as *thought* or pure essence, and knows this thought as being and as concrete existence [*Dasein*], and knows this existence as the negativity of itself, and thus as self, *this* self and universal self; precisely this is what revealed religion knows.<sup>17</sup>

But the revealed religion knows this existence of thought as incarnation in a particular man, knows the negativity inherent in selfhood as his crucifixion, and knows the universalization of selfhood as the spirit in the congregation. That is, as Hegel goes on to point out, all religious apprehension is in the formal mode of representation (*Vorstellung*); in a broad sense its mode is image, an objectification of its content as something placed over against the religious consciousness. Owing to this formal limitation, which is insuperable in religion as such,

the spiritual essence is still burdened with an unreconciled division into a here and beyond [*ein Diesseits und Jenseits*]. The *content* is the true one, but all of its moments, being constituted in the element of representation, have the character of appearing as completely independent sides that are only externally related to each other, rather than being conceptually grasped.<sup>18</sup>

Even when the "beyond" is declared to be fully "here" with us, the fact that this insight is "represented" (literally "placed before" us: *vorgestellt*) still gives it the *form* of being beyond.

Both in the *Phenomenology* and in the *Realphilosophie*<sup>19</sup> Hegel argues that the representational mode is intrinsic to religion. Because of its incompatibility with philosophical concept, he no longer thinks a new philosophical religion is possible. To transcend the formal limitation of representation is to transcend religion itself. Yet the Christian mythos, within this limitation, does "represent" spirit's negation of the manifold forms of its dismemberment, including, ultimately, even those of religion itself. That is why the religion of incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection is the absolute religion. It is, so to speak, the religion to end all religions, even as it negates every other dualistic entanglement of consciousness. Therefore it is presented as the final moment of phenomenal dualism, just short of that philosophical wisdom in which all dualisms are overcome. Its image of the crucified God,

furthermore, can be treated as emblematic of the phenomenological negation itself.

History grasped phenomenologically, really Hegel's *Phenomenology* itself, is the Golgotha of absolute spirit. But the *Phenomenology* is also the throne of its kingdom of resurrected spirits. The crucifixion-resurrection pattern bridges, from the side of religious representation, the distinction between religion itself and philosophy. But religious faith as such cannot cross this bridge. In order to realize the resurrection for which it so ardently longs, the externality of its representational form must give way to the internality of conceptual recollection (*Erinnerung*). Hence the pairing, which otherwise seems so odd, between "the recollection and the Golgotha of the absolute spirit." What is internally recollected in the science of wisdom must first be phenomenologically negated in its externality.

## NOTES

1. *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, (hereafter cited as PhG), 564/493. The first page citation is to the Hoffmeister edition (Hamburg, 1952); the second, after the slash, is to the Miller translation (Oxford, 1977).
2. PhG 67/49. In a footnote to this passage Mr. Miller suggests that the reference to stations is "An allusion perhaps to the Stations of the Cross."
3. *Glauben und Wissen*, in *Jenaer kritische Schriften*, eds. Hartmut Buchner and Otto Pöggeler (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1968), pp. 412–13.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 413.
5. *Ibid.*, pp. 413–14. Cf. the translation by Walter Cerf and H. S. Harris, *Faith and Knowledge* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1977), pp. 190–91.
6. Cf. the systematic use of *Anschauung* and *Begriff* in *System der Sittlichkeit*, an unpublished treatise dating from the same period. In the opening sentence Hegel remarks that the idea is none other than the identity of *Anschauung* and *Begriff*.
7. *Logik, Metaphysik, Naturphilosophie* (1804–05), in *Jenaer Systementwürfe II*, eds. Rolf-Peter Horstmann and Johann Heinrich Trede (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1971), pp. 160, 170 et passim.
8. Not to be confused with the *Treatise on Natural Law* Hegel composed for the *Critical Journal*, this lecture manuscript on natural law survives only in Rosenkranz's account, *Hegels Leben* (Berlin: 1844), pp. 132–41. Haym, who also saw the original manuscript before it disappeared, and refers to it in *Hegel und seine Zeit*, pp. 159–67, 414–16, 509, assures us that Rosenkranz's rendering is very close to the original wording. A version of it was printed in Johannes Hoffmeister, *Dokumente zu Hegel's Entwicklung* (Stuttgart: 1936), pp. 314–25, consisting of the Rosenkranz text with a few emendations by Haym. The dating is uncertain, but some of the terminology is so similar to the conclusion of *Glauben und Wissen* as to suggest that it was composed at about the same time.
9. Rosenkranz, p. 136; *Dokumente*, p. 318.
10. Rosenkranz, pp. 136–37; *Dokumente*, p. 319.
11. Rosenkranz, p. 137; *Dokumente*, p. 320.
12. Rosenkranz, pp. 137–38; *Dokumente*, p. 320.

13. PhG, 29/19. For a thorough study of Hegel's use of the concept of negativity in the *Phenomenology* and in each of the preceding Jena writings, see Wolfgang Bonsiepen, *Der Begriff der Negativität in den Jenaer Schriften Hegels*, *Hegel-Studien Beiheft* 16 (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag Herbert Grundmann, 1977).
14. Rosenkranz, p. 141; *Dokumente*, p. 325.
15. "Über das Verhältniss der Naturphilosophie zu Philosophie überhaupt," *Jenaer kritische Schriften*, pp. 271-74. The authorship of this essay in the *Critical Journal* was the subject of bitter dispute in the 1830s between the followers of Schelling and the original editors of Hegel's works. Though it was in fact probably written by Schelling, there is no reason to doubt that he was speaking for his coeditor as well in his call for a new philosophical religion.
16. *Jenaer Realphilosophie* (1805-06), ed. Johannes Hoffmeister (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag reprinting, 1969, of the edition of 1931 under the title *Jenenser Realphilosophie II*), p. 260.
17. PhG, 530/461.
18. PhG, 532/463.
19. *Realphilosophie*, pp. 268-71.

# PHILOSOPHY OF ACTION



# HEGEL AND THE PHILOSOPHY OF ACTION

Charles Taylor

I want to attempt in this paper to relate Hegel's thought to a set of perennial issues that have been central to the philosophy of action in modern times. The objective is twofold. Understanding Hegel's contribution to the developing modern debate on the nature of action helps us to understand the historical development of this debate; and this, I want to argue, is important for understanding the debate itself. At the same time, articulating the theory of action that is central to Hegel's philosophy helps us to see this philosophy itself in a new light.

Of course, for any highly systematic body of thought like Hegel's we can reconstruct the whole from many perspectives. Each one gives us something, though some are more illuminating than others. I believe that looking at Hegel's thought from the angle of the underlying conception of action provides one of the more interesting perspectives on the whole.

## THE NATURE OF ACTION

We can, perhaps, identify one fundamental issue that has been open in the philosophy of action in modern times. To do so, of course, requires some interpretation of the history of modern philosophy, and this, as always, can be subject to controversy. The precise question that defines this issue was not asked in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and is rather one that is central to our twentieth-century debate. But I want to claim, nevertheless, that different answers to this question were espoused earlier, as one can see from a number of related philosophical doctrines that were expressly

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propounded, and that depend on these answers. I hope the plausibility of this reading will emerge in the course of the whole argument.

This being said, I will baldly identify my central issue in unashamedly contemporary terms: What is the nature of action? Or, otherwise put, what distinguishes (human) action from other kinds of events? What are the peculiar features of action?

One family of views distinguishes actions by the kind of cause that brings them about. Actions are events that are peculiar in that they are brought about by desires, or intentions, or combinations of desires and beliefs. As events, actions may be described, among other ways, as physical movements (although one would have to be generous with the term "physical movements," so as to include cases of nonmovement, as, for example, with the action we would describe as "He stood still."). In this, they resemble a host of other events that are not actions. What distinguishes them is a peculiar type of psychological cause, that they are brought on by desires or intentions. Of course, to hold this is not necessarily to hold that psychological explanations are ultimate. One can also look forward to their reduction to some neurophysiological or physical theory. But in that case the burden of distinguishing action from nonaction would be taken over by antecedents differently described: perhaps some peculiar kind of firing in the cortex, that was found to be the basis for what we identify psychologically as desire.

A view of this kind seems to have been implicit in much of Donald Davidson's work.<sup>1</sup> But the basic conception goes back, I believe, at least to the seventeenth century. A conception of this kind was, in a sense, even more clearly at home in the basically dualist outlook common to both Cartesian and empiricist philosophies.

Qua bodily movements actions resembled all other events. What distinguished them was their inner, "mental" background. Within the bounds of this outlook, there was a clear ontological separation between outer event and inner background.

Against this, there is another family of views that sees action as qualitatively different from nonaction, in that actions are what we might call intrinsically directed. Actions are in a sense inhabited by the purposes that direct them, so that action and purpose are ontologically inseparable.

The basic intuition here is not hard to grasp, but it is difficult to articulate it very clearly. What is in any case clear is that this view involves a clear negation of the first: We cannot understand action in terms of the notions of undiscriminated event and a particular kind of cause; this is to explain it in terms of other primitive concepts. But for the second view, action is itself a primitive: There is a basic qualitative distinction between action and nonaction. To the extent that action can be further explicated in terms of a

concept like "purpose," this turns out not to be independently understandable. The purpose is not ontologically separable from the action, and this means that it can exist only in animating this action; or its only articulation as a purpose is in animating the action; or perhaps a fundamental articulation of this purpose, on which all others depend, lies in the action.

This second view thus resists the basic approach of the first. We can't understand action by first identifying it as an undifferentiated event (because it is qualitatively distinct), and then distinguishing it by some separably identifiable cause (because the only thing that could fill this function, the purpose, is not separably identifiable). One of the roots of this doctrine plainly is Aristotle's thesis of the inseparability of form and matter, and we can see that in contrast to Cartesianism and empiricism, it is plainly anti-dualist. This is not to say that proponents of the first view are necessarily dualist—at least not simply so; just that their conception permits of dualism, whereas the qualitative distinction thesis does not.

One of the issues that is thus bound up with that about the nature of action is the question of dualism. Another that I want to briefly mention here is the place of the subject. It is clear that the distinction between action and nonaction is one that occurs to us as agents. Indeed, one can argue plausibly that a basic, not further reducible distinction between action and what just happens is indispensable and ineradicable from our self-understanding as agents.<sup>2</sup> That is, it is impossible to function as an agent at all unless one marks a distinction of this kind.

In this context, we can understand part of the motivation for the first, or causal theory of action, as lying in the aspiration to go beyond the subjective standpoint of the agent and come to an understanding of things that is objective. An objective understanding in this sense would be one that was no longer tied to a particular viewpoint, imprisoned in the categories that a certain viewpoint imposes. If agency seems to impose the qualitative conception of action, then the causal one can appear as a superior analysis, an objective portrayal of the way things really stand, of the real components of action *an sich*. This drive for objectivity, or what Bernard Williams has called "absolute" descriptions,<sup>3</sup> was one of the animating motives of both Cartesianism and empiricism.

Now Hegel is clearly a proponent of the second, qualitative conception of action. And indeed he emerges out of a climate in which this conception was staging a comeback after the ascendancy of Cartesian and empiricist views. In one sense, the comeback can be seen to start with Leibniz, but the tenor of much late-eighteenth-century thought in Germany was of this stamp. The reaction against dualism, the recovery of the subject, the conception of the aesthetic object in Kant's third critique—all these pushed toward and, indeed, articulated themselves through this understanding of

action. I now want to develop its ramifications to show how central it is to Hegel's thought.

## AGENT'S KNOWLEDGE

The first important ramification of the qualitative theory is that it allows for what I shall call agent's knowledge. The notion is that we are capable of grasping our own action in a way that we cannot come to know external objects and events. In other words, there is a knowledge we are capable of, concerning our own action, that we can attain as the doers of this action; and this is different from the knowledge we may gain of objects we observe or scrutinize.

This qualitative distinction in kinds of knowledge is grounded on the qualitative view of action. Action is distinct in that it is directed, aimed to encompass ends or purposes. And this notion of directedness is part of our conception of agency: The agent is the being responsible for the direction of action, the being for whom and through whom action is directed. The notion of action is normally correlative to that of an agent.

Now if we think of this agent as identical with the subject of knowledge, then we can see how there can be different kinds of knowledge. One kind is gained by making articulate what we are doing, the direction we are already imprinting on events in our action. As agents, we will already have some sense, however dim, inarticulate, or subliminal, of what we are doing; otherwise, we could not speak of directing at all. So agent's knowledge is a matter of bringing this sense to formulation, articulation, or full consciousness. It is a matter of making articulate something we already have an inarticulate sense of.

This evidently contrasts with knowledge of other objects, the things we observe and deal with in the world. Here we are learning about things external to our action, which we may indeed act with or on, but that stand over against action.

Now the first, or causal, view cannot draw this contrast. The contrast is one that is evident only from the agent's standpoint; agent's knowledge is available to the knower only qua agent, and thus from this standpoint. It cannot be recognized as knowledge from the absolute standpoint. Thus for the causal view, my action is an external event like any other, only distinct in having a certain kind of cause. I cannot claim to know it in some special way.

Of course, what I can claim "privileged access" to is my desire, or intention—the cause of my action. And here we come to the closest thing to an analogous distinction within the causal view to that between agent's and observer's knowledge. In the original formulations of Cartesianism and

empiricism, I am transparently or immediately aware of the contents of my mind. It may be accorded that I intend to eat this apple. But of the consequences of this desire or intention, viz., my consuming the apple, I have knowledge like that of any other external event; I observe it.

We might then contrast the two views by noting that the causal view too recognizes two kinds of knowledge, but it draws the boundaries quite differently, between "inner" and "outer" reality. But we would have to add that this difference of location of the boundary goes along with a quite different view of what the knowledge consists of. The notion of immediate or incorrigible knowledge makes sense in the context of dualism, of a separate domain of inner, mental space, of which we can say at least that its *esse* entails its *percipi*. The contrast will be something like that between immediate and inferential knowledge, or the incorrigible and the revisable.

Once we draw the boundary the way the qualitative theory does, there is no question of incorrigibility. We may never be without some sense of what we are doing, but coming to have knowledge is coming to formulate that sense correctly, and we may do this only in a partial or distorted fashion. Nor is this knowledge ever immediate; it is, on the contrary, mediated by our efforts at formulation. We have indeed a different mode of access to what we are doing, but it is questionable whether we should dub this access privileged. Neither immediacy nor incorrigibility are marks of agent's knowledge.

Now, in a sense, this idea of agent's knowledge originates in modern thought with Vico. But since his work didn't have the influence it deserved in the eighteenth century, we should perhaps see Kant as the important seminal figure. Not that Kant allowed a full-blooded notion of agent's knowledge. Indeed, he shied away from using the word *knowledge* in this context. But he made the crucial distinction between our empirical knowledge of objects on the one hand, and the synthetic a priori truths that we can establish on the other, about the mathematical and physical structure of things. In Kant's mind it is clear that we can establish the latter with certainty only because they are in an important sense our own doing.

Perceiving the world involves not just the reception of information, but also our own conceptual activity, and we can know for certain the framework of empirical reality because we ourselves provide it.

Moreover, in Kant's procedure of proof of these synthetic a priori truths, he shows them to be essential conditions of undeniable features of experience, such as, for example, that we mark a distinction between the objective and the subjective in experience, or that the "I think" must be able to accompany all our representations. Later he will show the postulates of freedom, God, and immortality as essential conditions of the practice of determining our action by moral precepts. If we ask what makes these

starting points allegedly undeniable, I think the answer can only be that we can be sure of them because they are what we are doing when we perceive the world or determine our action on moral grounds.<sup>4</sup>

Kant thus brings back into the center of modern epistemological debate the notion of activity and hence of agent's knowledge. Cartesian incorrigibility, the immediate knowledge I have of myself as a thinking substance, is set aside. In its place come the certainties that we don't have immediately, but can gain, concerning not some substance or any object of knowledge, but the structures of our own activity. What we learn by this route is accessible only by this route. It is something quite different from the knowledge of objects.

This has been an immensely influential idea in modern philosophy. One line of development from Kant lies through Schopenhauer, who distinguished our grasp of ourselves as representation and as will, and from this through Wittgenstein into modern British analytic philosophy, for example, in Miss Anscombe's notion of nonobservational knowledge.<sup>5</sup>

But the line that interests us here passes through Fichte. Fichte's attempt to define subject-object identity is grounded on the view that agent's knowledge is the only genuine form of knowledge. Both Fichte and Schelling take up Kant's notion of an "intellectual intuition," which for Kant was the kind of agent's knowledge that could be attributed only to God, one through which the existence of the object itself was given or one in which the manifold is given by the activity of self (*selbstthatig*). But they make this the basis of genuine self-knowledge by the ego and then of all genuine knowledge, in so far as object and subject are shown to be identical.

The category of agent's knowledge has obviously taken on a central role, has exploded beyond the limits that Kant set for it; it is indeed the principal instrument by which these limits are breached and the realm of inaccessible *noumena* denied. But the extension of agent's knowledge obviously goes along with a redefinition of the subject. He is no longer simply the finite subject in general that figures in the *Critiques*, but is related in some way to a single infinite or cosmic subject.

Hegel is obviously the heir to this development. He takes up the task of demonstrating subject-object identity and believes himself alone to be capable of demonstrating this properly. What is first seen as other is shown to be identical with the self. It is crucial to this demonstration that the self cease to understand itself as merely finite, but see itself as part of spirit.

But the recognition of identity takes the form of grasping that everything emanates from spirit's activity. To understand reality is to understand it as "actuality" (translating *Wirklichkeit*), i.e., as what has been actualized. We see it as not just given, but produced or posited by spirit's action. This is the crucial prerequisite of the final state, which comes when we see that the



agent of this activity is not foreign to us, but that we are identical to (in our nonidentity with) spirit. The highest categories of Logic, those that provide the entry into the absolute Idea, are thus those linked with agency and activity. We move from the teleology into the categories of life, and then from knowledge to the good.

The recognition thus requires that we understand reality as activity, but it requires as well that we come to understand in a fuller way what we are doing, up to the point of seeing what spirit is doing through us. Coming to this point, we see the identity of the world activity with ours.

Thought thus culminates in a form of agent's knowledge. But this is not just a department of what we know alongside observer's knowledge, as it is for our ordinary understanding. Rather observer's knowledge is ultimately superseded. But the distinction is nonetheless essential to the system, since its crucial claim is that we rise to the higher kind of knowledge only through a supersession of the lower kind.

And this higher knowledge is far from immediate. On the contrary, it is only possible as mediated through forms of expression, among which the only adequate medium is conceptual thought. And this brings us to another ramification of the qualitative view, which is also of central importance for Hegel.

## CONSCIOUS ACTION

On the qualitative view, action may be totally unreflecting; it may be something we carry out without awareness. We may then become aware of what we are doing, formulate our ends. So following on a conscious desire or intention is not an inescapable feature of action. On the contrary, this degree of awareness in our action is something we come to achieve.

In achieving this, we also transform our activity. The quality of consciously directed activity is different from that of our unreflected, semiconscious performance. This flows naturally from the second view on action: If action is qualitatively different from nonaction, and this difference consists in the fact that action is directed; then action is also different when this direction takes on a crucially different character. And it does this when we move from unreflecting response, where we act in much the same manner as animals do, to conscious formulation of our purposes. Our action becomes directed in a different and stronger sense. To become conscious is to be able to act in a new way.

Now the causal theory doesn't allow for this kind of qualitative shift. Indeed in its original, dualist variant, it couldn't even allow for unreflecting action. Action is essentially caused by desire or intention, and on the



original Cartesian-empiricist model, our desires were essentially features of inner experience. To have a desire was to feel a desire. Hence in this view, action was essentially preceded by a cause of which the agent was aware. This amounted in fact to making conscious action, where we are aware of our ends, the only kind of action. It left no place at all for totally unmonitored, unconscious activity, the kind of action animals engage in all the time, and we do much of the time.

And even when the causal theory is disengaged from its dualist or mentalist formulation, where the causes of action are seen as material, and hence quite conceivably largely unconscious, the theory still has no place for the notion that action is qualitatively transformed in becoming conscious. Awareness may allow us to intervene more effectively to control what comes about, but action remains essentially an undifferentiated external event with a certain kind of cause.

Now this offshoot of the qualitative view—that action is not essentially or originally conscious, that to make it so is an achievement, and that this achievement transforms it—is also crucial to the central doctrines of Hegel. I want to look at two of them here.

### *The Principle of Embodiment*

The first is what I have called elsewhere the principle of embodiment.<sup>6</sup> This is the principle that the subject and all his functions, however spiritual they may appear, are inescapably embodied. The embodiment is in two related dimensions: first, as a rational animal, i.e., as a living being who thinks; and second, as an expressive being, i.e., as a being whose thinking is always and necessarily in a medium.

The basic notion here is that what passes in modern philosophy for the “mental” is the inward reflection of what was originally external activity. Self-conscious understanding is the fruit of an interiorization of what was originally external. The seeming self-consciousness of thought in which I am apparently immediately aware of my desires, aims, and ideas, which is foundational to Cartesianism, is understood rather as an achievement, the overcoming of the externality of an unconscious, merely instinctive life. It is the fruit of a negation of what negates thought, not itself a positive datum.

This understanding of conscious self-possession as the negation of the negation is grounded on the conception of action I have been outlining. In effect, it involves seeing our mental life fundamentally in the category of action. If we think of the constituents of mental life, our desires, feelings, ideas, as merely given, as the objects that surround us in the world are given, then it is plausible to think of our knowledge of them as privileged.

They appear to be objects that we cannot but be aware of, if we are aware at all. Our awareness of them is something basic, assured from the start, since it is essentially involved in our being aware at all.

In order to understand mental life as something we have to achieve understanding of, so that self-transparency is a goal we must work toward, we have to abandon the view of it as constituted of data. We have to understand it as action on at least one of two levels, if not both.

On one level, we have to see self-perception as something we do, something we can bring off or fail to bring off, rather than a feature of our basic predicament. This means that we see it as the fruit of an activity of formulating how things are with us, what we desire, feel, think, etc. In this way, grasping what we desire or feel is something we can altogether fail to do, or do in a distorting or partial or censored fashion. If we think through the consequences of this, I believe we see that it requires that we conceive self-understanding as something that is brought off in a medium, through symbols or concepts, and formulating things in this medium as one of our fundamental activities.

We can see this if we leap out of the Hegelian context and look at the quite different case of Freud. Here we have the most notorious doctrine of the nonself-transparency of the human psyche. But this is mediated through a doctrine of self-understanding through symbols, and our (more or less distorted and screened) formulation of our desires, fears, etc. as something we do. For although these formulations occur without our willful and conscious intent, they are nevertheless motivated. Displacements, condensations, etc., occur when we are strongly motivated to bring them off.

But on a second level, we may also see the features of ourselves that self-perception grasps not as simply givens but as themselves bound up with activity. Thus desires, feelings may not be understood as just mental givens, but as the inner reflection of the life process that we are. Our ideas may not be conceived as simple mental concepts, but as the precipitates of thinking.

Hegel understands mental life as activity on both these levels. In a sense, the first can be thought to represent the influence of Kant. It was Kant who defended the principle that there is no perception of any kind that is not constituted by our conceptual activity. Thus there is no self-awareness, as there is no awareness of anything else, without the active contribution of the "I think." It was the contribution of the new richer theory of meaning that arose in the wake of romanticism to see that this constitutive thought required an expressive medium. Freud is, of course, via Schopenhauer, the inheritor both of this Kantian doctrine and of the expressivist climate of thought, and hence also through Schopenhauer of the idea that our self-

understanding can be very different in different media, as well as distorted in the interests of deeper impulses that we barely comprehend.

Making activity central on the second level is also the fruit of what I want to call the expressivist climate of thought, which refused the distinctions between mind and body, reason and instinct, intellect and feeling, that earlier Enlightenment thought had made central. Thought and reason were to be understood as having their seat in the single life process from which feeling also arose. Hence the new vogue for Aristotelian inseparability doctrine, of form and matter, of thought and expression, of soul and body.

Hegel's theory is built on both these streams. Our self-understanding is conceived as the inner self-reflection of a life process, which at the outset fails to grasp what it is about. We learn through a painful and slow process to formulate ourselves less and less inadequately. At the beginning, desire is unreflected, and in that condition aims simply for the incorporation of the desired object. But this is inherently unsatisfactory, because the aims of spirit are to recognize the self in the other, and not simply to abolish otherness. And so we proceed to a higher form of desire, the desire for desire, the demand for recognition. This too starts off in a barely self-conscious form, which needs to be further transformed.

In this theory, activity is made central on both levels: On the second, more fundamental level, what is to be understood here, the desire, is not seen as a mere psychic given, a datum of mental life. On the contrary, it is a reflection (and at first an inadequate one) of the goals of a life process that is now embodied and in train in the world. Properly understood, this is the life process of spirit, but we are, at the outset, far from seeing that. So the active life process is primary, even in defining the object of knowledge.

Then, on the first level, the achievement of more and more adequate understandings is something that comes about through our activity of formulating. This takes place for Hegel, as we shall see later, not only in concepts and symbols, but also in common institutions and practices. For example, the institution of the master-slave relationship is one "formulation" (and still an inadequate one) of the search for recognition. Grasping things through symbols, establishing and maintaining practices, are things we do, are to be understood as activities, in Hegel's theory.

And so we have two related activities. There is a fundamental activity of Spirit, which it tries to grasp through the various levels of self-formulation. These two mutually conditioning activities are at first out of phase but are destined in the end to coincide perfectly. That is because it will come clear at the end that the goal of the whole life process was that Spirit come to understand itself, and at the same time the life process itself will be entirely transparent as an embodiment of this purpose.

But this perfect coincidence comes only at the end. And it comes only through the overcoming of noncoincidence, when what the pattern of activity is differs from what this pattern says. And so the distinction between these two dimensions is essential for the Hegelian philosophy: We could call them the *effective* and the *expressive*. Each life form in history is both the effective realization of a certain pattern and at the same time the expression of a certain self-understanding of man, and hence also of spirit. The gap between these two is the historical contradiction that moves us on.

And so for Hegel, the principle of embodiment is central. What we focus on as the mental can only be understood in the first place as the inner reflection of an embodied life process; and this inner reflection is itself mediated by our formulations in an expressive medium. So that all spiritual life is embodied in the two dimensions just described: It is the life of a living being who thinks; and his thinking is essentially expression. This double shift from Cartesianism, from a psychology of immediate self-transparency, to one of achieved interiority, of the negation of the negation, is obviously grounded on the qualitative understanding of action and the central role it plays here.

The mental life has a depth that defies all immediate self-transparency, just because it is not merely self-contained, but is the reflection of a larger life process; plumbing this depth is in turn seen as something we do, as the fruit of the activity of self-formulation.

Once again, we see that the Hegelian understanding of things involves our seeing activity as all-pervasive. But the activity concerned is as it is conceived in the qualitative view.

### *The Transformation of Action*

We can thus see that this offshoot of the qualitative view, which sees action as first unreflecting, and reflective understanding as an achievement, underpins what I call the principle of embodiment in Hegel's thought. But we saw above that for this conception reflective consciousness transforms action. And this aspect too is crucial to Hegel's theory.

His conception is of an activity that is at first uncertain or self-defeating because its purposes are barely understood. The search for recognition is, properly understood, a demand for reciprocal recognition within the life of a community. This is what our activity is in fact groping towards, but at first we do not understand it in this way. In a still confused and inarticulate fashion, we identify the goal as attaining one-sided recognition for ourselves from others. It follows that our practice will be confused in its purposes and self-defeating. The essential nature of the activity is not altered by our inadequate understanding of it; the true goal of the search for

recognition remains community. Our inadequacy of understanding only means that our action itself is confused, and that means that its quality as directed activity is impaired.

We can see this kind of confusion, for instance, at the stage where we seek to answer our need for recognition through an institution like that of slavery. We are already involved here with what will turn out to be the only possible solution to this quest, viz., community; because even the institution of the master-slave relation will typically be defined and mediated by law, a law that binds all parties and that implicitly recognizes them as subjects of right. Within this framework, the relations of domination, of ownership of man by man, contradict the basic nature of law. If we think of building and maintaining these institutions as an activity we are engaged in together, which is how Hegel sees it, then we can see that our activity itself is confused and contradictory. This is indeed why it will be self-defeating, and why this institutional complex will eventually undermine and destroy itself.

A new form of society then will arise out of the ruins of this one. But the practices of this new society will be higher than previous ones only to the extent that we have learned from the previous error and now have a more satisfactory understanding of what we are engaged in. And indeed, it is possible to accede eventually to a practice that has fully overcome confusion and is no longer self-defeating only if we finally come to an understanding that is fully adequate.

But throughout this whole development we can see the close relation that exists between the level of our understanding and the quality of our practice. On this view, our action itself can be more or less firmly guided, more or less coherent and self-consistent. And its being one or the other is related to the level of our self-understanding.

We are reminded here of a common conception of the romantics, well expressed in a story by Kleist, that fully coherent action must be either totally unreflecting or the fruit of full understanding. The birth of self-consciousness on this view disrupts our activity, and we can compensate for this disruption only by a self-awareness that is total. Hegel takes up this conception with an important difference. The crucial activity is that of Spirit, and it aims for self-recognition. As a consequence, there is no such thing as the perfection of totally unreflecting activity. The earliest phases of human life are even then phases of Spirit, and the contradiction is present between their unconsciousness and what they implicitly seek.

In sum, we can see that this ramification of the qualitative theory of action involves a basic reversal in the order of explanation from the philosophy that Cartesianism and empiricism bequeathed to us. It amounts to another one of those shifts in what is taken as primitive in explanation, similar and related to the one mentioned at the outset.

There I pointed out that in the Cartesian-empiricist view, action was something to be further explained, compounded out of undifferentiated event and a certain kind of cause. The cause here was a desire or intention, a "mental" event; and these mental occurrences are taken as primitives by this kind of theory and part of the explanatory background of action.

But the qualitative view turns out to reverse this order. The "mental" is not a primitive datum, but is rather something achieved. But more, we explain its genesis from action, as the reflective understanding we eventually attain of what we are doing. So the status of primitive and derived in explanation is reversed. One theory explains action in terms of the supposedly more basic datum of the mental; the other accounts for the mental as a development out of our primitive capacity for action.

## THE THEORY OF MEANING

The qualitative view also brings about another reversal, this time in the theory of meaning, which is worth examining for its own sake, as well as for its importance to Hegel.

I said above that for this view, becoming aware of ourselves, coming to self-consciousness, is something we do. We come to be able to formulate properly what we are about. But this notion of formulation refers to that of an expressive medium.

One way to trace the connection is this: If we think of self-consciousness as the fruit of action, and we think of action as first of all unreflecting bodily practice, which only later comes to be self-understood, then the activity of formulating must itself conform to this model. That is, our formulating ourselves would be at first a relatively unreflective bodily practice, and only later would we attain the self-clarity required for full self-consciousness.

But this is just what we see in the new expressive theories of meaning, which arose in the late eighteenth century, and which Hegel took over. First, the very notion of expression is that of self-revelation as a special kind of bodily practice. The Enlightenment theory of signs, born of the epistemological theories of the seventeenth century, made no fundamental distinction between expressing and any other form of self-revelation. You can see that I am afraid of a recession by the fact that I'm selling short; you can see that I'm afraid of you by the expression on my face; you can see that it's going to rain because the barometer is falling. Each of these was seen as a sign that points beyond to something it designates or reveals. Enlightenment theorists marked distinctions between signs: some were by nature, some by convention. For Condillac, there were three kinds: accidental and natural signs, and signs by institution.

But the distinction they overlooked was the crucial one for an expressivist—that between signs that allow you to infer their *designatum*, like the barometer reveals rain, and true signs, which express something. When we make something plain in expression, we reveal it in public space in a way that has no parallel in cases of inference. The barometer “reveals” rain indirectly. This contrasts with our perceiving rain directly. But when I make plain my anger or my joy, in facial or verbal expression, there is no such contrast. This is not a second best, the dropping of clues that enable you to infer. This is what manifesting anger or joy is. They are made evident not by or through the expression but in it.

The new theories of meaning, which start perhaps with Herder’s critique of Condillac, involved a fundamental shift. They recognize the special nature of those human activities that reveal things in this special way. Let us call them expressive activities. These are bodily activities. They involve using signs, gestures, spoken or written words. Moreover, their first uses are relatively unreflecting. They aim to make plain in public space how we feel, or how we stand with each other, or where things stand for us. It is a long slow process that enables us to get things in clearer focus, describe them more exactly, and above all, become more knowledgeable about ourselves.

To do this requires that we develop finer and more discriminating media. We can speak of an embodiment that reveals in this expressive way as a “medium.” Then the struggle for deeper and more accurate reflective self-understanding can be understood as the attempt to discover or coin more adequate media. Facial expressions do much to make us present to each other our feelings and desires, but for self-understanding, we need a refined and subtle vocabulary.

This amounts to another major reversal in theory. The Enlightenment account explained meaning in terms of the link of designation or signifying between word and object. This was a link set up in thought. In Locke’s theory, it was even seen as a link set up through thought, since the word, strictly speaking, signified the idea of the object. Meaning is explained here by thought, which once again is seen in the role of explanatory primitive. In this conception, expression is seen as just one case of the signifying relation, which is seen as constituted in thought.

But for the expressive theory, it is expression that is the primitive. Thought, that is, the clear, explicit kind of thought we need to establish new coinages, new relations of signifying, is itself explained from expression. Both ontogenetically and in the history of culture, our first expressions are in public space and are the vehicles of a quite unreflective awareness. Later we both develop more refined media, in concepts and images, and become more and more capable of carrying out some part of our expressive activity monologically; that is, we become capable of formulating some



things just for ourselves, and hence of thinking privately. We then develop the capacity to frame some things clearly to ourselves, and thus even to coin new expressions for our own use. But this capacity, which the Enlightenment theory takes as a primitive, is seen here as a late achievement, a change we ultimately come to be able to ring on our expressive capacity. The latter is what is now seen as basic in the order of explanation.

In our day, a similar radical reversal was carried out in the theory of meaning by Ludwig Wittgenstein, who took as his target the theory that emerges out of modern epistemological theory, to which he himself had partly subscribed earlier. What I have called the Herderian theory is very reminiscent therefore of Wittgenstein's.

But Hegel wrote in the wake of the earlier expressive revolution. And once can see its importance for his thought by the crucial place of what I have called the notion of medium. The goal of Spirit is clear, self-conscious understanding. But the struggle to attain this is just the struggle to formulate it in an adequate medium.

Thus Hegel distinguishes art, religion, and philosophy as media, in ascending order of adequacy. The perception of the absolute is embodied in the work of art, it is presented there (*dargestellt*). But this is in a form that is still relatively inarticulate and unreflecting. Religious doctrine and cult bring us closer to adequacy, but are still clouded by images and representations (*Vorstellungen*). The only fully adequate form is conceptual thought, which allows both transparency and full reflective awareness. But attaining our formulation in this medium is the result of a long struggle. It is an achievement; and one that builds on, and required the formulations in the other, less adequate media. Philosophy doesn't build only on its own past, for in earlier ages, the truth is more adequately presented in religion (for example, the early ages of Christianity), or art-religion (at the height of the Greek polis). In coming to its adequate form, philosophy, as it were, catches up. True speculative philosophy has to say clearly what has been there already in the images of Christian theology.

Thus for Hegel too thought is the achievement whereby our expression is made more inward and clear. The attainment of self-understanding is the fruit of an activity that itself conforms to the basic model of action, in that it is at first unreflecting bodily practice and only later attains self-clarity. This is the activity of expressing.

## HUMAN ACTION

I have been looking at how the qualitative theory of action and its ramifications underlie Hegel's philosophy, for in the end everything is to be

understood in terms of the all-pervasive activity of Spirit. I have been arguing that we can understand the kind of activity here involved only if we have in mind the qualitative view.

But there are also some important features of human historical action on Hegel's view that make sense only against this conception. I want to mention two here.

All action is not, in the last analysis, action of individuals; there are irreducibly collective actions. The causal view was inherently atomist. An action was such because it was caused by desire, intention, some "mental" state. But these mental states could be understood only as states of individuals. The mental is what is "inner," which means within each one of us. And so action is ultimately individual. That is to say, collective actions ultimately amount to the convergent action of many individuals and nothing more. To say "the X church did so-and-so," or "the Y party did such and such" must amount to attributing converging action to clumps of individuals in each case. For what makes these events actions in each case is their having inner mental causes, and these have to occur or not occur discretely within individuals.

By contrast, the qualitative view does not tie action only to the individual agent. The nature of the agency becomes clear to us only when we have a clear understanding of the nature of the action. This can be individual; but it can also be the action of a community, and in a fashion that is irreducible to individual action. It can even conceivably be the action of an agent who is not simply identical with human agency.

Hegel, of course, avails himself of both of these latter possibilities. In his conception of public life, as it exists in a properly established system of objective ethics (*Sittlichkeit*), the common practices or institutions that embody this life are seen as our doing. But they constitute an activity that is genuinely common to us, it is ours in a sense that cannot be analyzed into a convergence of *mines*.

But for Hegel, there is a crucial level of activity, which is not only more than individual, but even more than merely human. Some of what we do we can understand also and more deeply as the action of Spirit through us. In order to arrive at a proper understanding, we thus have to transcend our ordinary self-understanding. To the extent that our common sense is atomist, we have to make two big transpositions: In the first, we come to see that some of our actions are those of communities; in the second, we see that some are the work of Spirit. It is in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* that we see these transitions being made. The first corresponds to the step from Chapter V to Chapter VI (here Hegel speaks of the community action by using the term *Spirit*). The second is made as we move through the discussion in the third part of Chapter VI into the chapter on religion.

Following what I have said in earlier sections, human action is to be understood in two dimensions, the effective and the expressive. This latter dimension makes it even clearer how action is not necessarily that of the individual. An expression in public space may turn out to be the expression essentially of a common sentiment or purpose. That is, it may be essential to this sentiment or purpose that it be shared, and the expression may be the vehicle of this sharing.

These two features together—that action can be that of a community, and that it also exists in the expressive dimension—form the crucial background to Hegel's philosophy of society and history. The *Sittlichkeit* of a given society is not only the action of a community, or of individuals only so far as they identify themselves as members of a community (an I that is we, and a we that is I); it also embodies and gives expression to a certain understanding of the agent, his community, and their relation to the divine. It is this latter that gives us the key to the fate of the society. For it is here that the basic incoherence underlying social practice will appear as contradiction, as we saw with the case of the slave-owning society above. Hegel's notion of historical development can be properly stated only if we understand social institutions in this way, as transindividual action that also has an expressive dimension. By contrast, the causal view and its accompanying atomist outlook induce us to explain institutions in purely instrumental terms. And in these terms, Hegel's theory cannot be formulated. We cannot even begin to state what it is all about.<sup>7</sup>

## CONCLUSION

I have been arguing that we can understand Hegel against the background of a long-standing and very basic issue in modern philosophy about the nature of action. Hegel's philosophy can be understood as firmly grounded on an option in favor of what I have been calling the qualitative view of action and against the causal view.

I have tried to follow the different ramifications of this qualitative view to show their importance to Hegel's thought. I looked first at the notion of agent's knowledge, and we saw that the system of philosophy itself can be seen as the integration of everything into a form of all-embracing agent's knowledge. I then followed another development of the qualitative view, which shows us action as primordially unreflecting bodily practice, which later can be transformed by the agent's achievement of reflective awareness. We saw that Hegel's conceptions of subjectivity and its development are rooted in this understanding. I then argued that the expressive revolution in the theory of meaning could be seen as an offshoot of this same view of

action, and that Hegel is clearly operating within the expressive conception. Finally we can see that his theory of history supposes not just the expressive dimension but also the idea of irreducibly common actions, which only the qualitative view can allow.

One part of my case is thus that Hegel's philosophy can be illuminated by making this issue explicit in all its ramifications. This is the way we make any philosophy clearer—by spelling out more fully some of its deepest assumptions. The illumination will be greater the more fundamental and pervasive the assumptions in question are for the theory under study. Now my claim is that for Hegel the qualitative theory of action is very basic and all-pervasive, and the preceding pages have attempted to show this.

Perhaps out of deference to Hegel's shade, in this anniversary year, I shouldn't use the word *assumption*, since for Hegel everything is ultimately demonstrated. But my claim stands that the thesis about action I have been describing here is quite central to his philosophy.

But this is only one side of the gain that one can hope for in a study of this kind. The other, as I said at the outset, is that we should attain some greater understanding of the historical debate itself by situating Hegel in it. I think this is so as well, but I haven't got space to argue it here.

What does emerge from the above is that Hegel is one of the important and seminal figures in the long and hard-fought emergence of a counter-theory to the long-dominant epistemologically based view that the seventeenth century bequeathed us. This can help explain why he has been an influential figure in the whole countermovement where this has been the case. But what remains to be understood is why he has also been ignored or rejected by many major figures who have shared somewhat the same notions of action, starting with Schopenhauer but by no means ending there.

Perhaps what separates Hegel most obviously and most profoundly from those today who take the same side on the issue about action is their profoundly different reading of the same genetic view. For Heidegger, for example, the notion that action is first of all unreflected practice seems to rule out altogether as chimerical the goal of a fully explicit and self-authenticating understanding of what we are about. Disclosure is invariably accompanied by hiddenness; the explicit depends on the horizon of the implicit. The difference here is fundamental, but I believe that it too can be illuminated if we relate it to radically different readings of the qualitative view of action, which both Hegel and Heidegger espoused in opposition to the epistemological rationalism of the seventeenth century. But I cannot even attempt to show this here.

## NOTES

1. Cf. his "Actions, Reasons and Causes," *The Journal of Philosophy*, 60, no. 23, "Freedom to Act," in Ted Honderich, ed., *Essays on Freedom of Action* (London, 1973).
2. I have tried to do this in my "Action as Expression," in *Intention and Intentionality*, eds. C. Diamond and J. Teichman (London, 1979).
3. Cf. his *Descartes* (London, 1978).
4. I have argued this further in my "The Validity of Transcendental Arguments," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, 1978-1979*, pp. 151-65.
5. Cf. *Intention* (Oxford, 1957), pp. 13-15.
6. *Hegel and Modern Society* (Cambridge, 1979), p. 18.
7. I have developed this further in my "Hegel's *Sittlichkeit* and the Crisis of Representative Institutions," in *Philosophy of History and Action*, ed. Yirmiahu Yovel (London and Jerusalem, 1978).

# THE SOCIAL IDEAL OF HEGEL'S ECONOMIC THEORY

H. S. Harris

Readers of Shlomo Avineri's *Hegel's Theory of the Modern State* will know that the manuscripts of Hegel's Jena period contain some remarkable anticipations of the Marxian analysis of the economic dialectic of factory capitalism. Avineri cited most of the more startling passages, but I shall content myself with just three that illustrate the essential aspect of Hegel's proto-Marxism.

In the first place Hegel saw that the rationalization of labor, and the substitution of the formal task of machine minding for the material burdens of physical effort, both reduce the value of individual labor and impoverish the activity of labor, itself regarded as the life occupation of the worker:

in the MACHINE man supersedes just this formal activity of his own, and lets it do all the work for him. But this deceit that the practices against nature, and through which he abides stably within its singularity, takes its revenge upon him; what he gains from nature, the more he subdues it, the lower he sinks himself. When he lets nature be worked over by a variety of machines, he does not cancel the necessity for his own laboring but only postpones it, and makes it more distant from nature; and living labor is not directed on nature as alive, but this negative vitality evaporates from it, and the laboring that remains to man becomes itself more machinelike; man diminishes labor only for the whole, not for the single [laborer]; for him it is increased rather; for the more machinelike labor becomes, the less it is worth, and the more one must work in that mode.<sup>1</sup>

In the second place, Hegel saw that the operation of a free market upon laborers subject to this process of rationalization, as also its effect upon

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The main thesis of this paper sprang from a critical reaction to the claim of D. E. S. Macgregor (in an unpublished manuscript) that Hegel's idea of society was already a form of communism. The acknowledgment is all the more necessary because in the revised version of Macgregor's work, which will be published by the University of Toronto Press, this claim appears only in a very muted form.

artisans whose "formal" activity with tools was superseded by the machine, must turn them into a revolutionary force of the kind that he called "barbaric." We need to know that in his view the historical function of the "barbarians" was to be the "broom of God"—to overrun and sweep away the complex social institutions of civilized life whose existence they did not even recognize:

great wealth, which is similarly bound up with the deepest poverty (for in the separation [between rich and poor] labor on both sides is universal and objective), produces on the one side in ideal [ideel] universality, on the other side in real [reell] universality, mechanically. This purely quantitative element, the inorganic aspect of labor, which is parcelled out even in its concept, is the unmitigated extreme of barbarism. The original character of the acquisitive estate, namely, its being capable of an organic absolute intuition and respect for something divine, even though posited outside it, disappears, and the bestiality of contempt for all higher things enters. The mass of wealth, the pure universal, the absence of wisdom, is the implicit essence (*das Ansich*). The absolute bond of the people, namely ethical principle, has vanished, and the people is dissolved. The government has to work as hard as possible against this inequality and the destruction of private and public life wrought by it. It can do this directly in an external way by making high gain more difficult, and if it sacrifices one part of this estate to mechanical and factory labor and abandons it to barbarism, it must keep the whole without question in the life possible for it. But this happens most necessarily, or rather immediately, through the inner constitution of the estate.<sup>2</sup>

This second quotation contains some puzzles. What is the "universality and objectivity" of labor? And how and what does labor produce in "ideal" and "real universality" respectively? What is the "capacity for an organic absolute intuition" that disappears, and why does it do so? To the last question we shall have to return. About the others, let me say, briefly—and for the present dogmatically—that the "universality of labor" is its reduction to the bare form of machine minding, so that any single laborer is easily replaced by another, just as any tiller of the soil is; and its "objectivity" consists in the fact that the energy source derives from the order of nature, not from living effort; thus "great wealth" produces, on the one side, in the ideal universality of understanding, the engineering problem, on the other side, in real universality, by making, linking together, and minding the engines.

I will concede that other interpretations of "objectivity" and "ideal universality" are possible, but this one is consistent with the context here (and with a number of others); and, in any case it is indisputable that Hegel is talking about the industrial rationalization and mechanization of labor, and that he claims that it reduces one part of the "acquisitive estate" (*Erwerbs-*



stand) to "barbarism." My interpretation of what "barbarism" means can be justified from the analysis of barbarian "havoc" in the *System of Ethical Life* (the work from which the quotation itself is taken).<sup>3</sup> But since there can at best be no more than a very imperfect analogy between the "barbarism" of Genghis Khan (or even of Attila) and that produced by the economic class war, I will add finally a third quotation from the last and plainest of Hegel's early lecture manuscripts, which states the social effects of the economic dialectic in more familiar terms:

The antithesis of great wealth and great poverty emerges—the poverty for which it becomes impossible to come up with something on its own account;—wealth like every [physical] mass makes itself into force—accumulation of wealth [is] partly by chance, partly through the universal [economy] by way of its apportioning. [It is] a centre of attraction [i.e. one] of a kind which casts its glance more widely over the universal, gathers [it] around itself—just as a great mass draws the lesser one to it;—he that hath, to him shall be given.—Acquisition becomes a many sides system, bringing in income on all sides, on sides which a smaller business cannot make use of; or the abstraction of labor reaches out to embrace ever more singular types, and achieves an ever wider scope. This inequality of wealth and poverty, this need [*Not*] and necessity becomes the most extreme disruption [*Zerrissenheit*] of the general will—inward insurrection and hatred.<sup>4</sup>

When Avineri drew attention to this proto-Marxist analysis of factory capitalism for the first time (at the Marquette Hegel Symposium in 1970), Otto Pöggeler commented gently, but, as I thought then, very cogently, that he had not taken any account of the extremely different character of the three different "systems" to which the manuscripts he had lumped together belonged. When I arrived at the "Real Philosophy" of 1805/6 in my own snail-like progress through the Jena papers, I felt that my conviction was justified; for it seemed to me that I could make out a plausible case that Hegel has an answer in 1805 for what was only a problem in the manuscript of 1802. But when I came to gather the threads together, I found that this was almost certainly a mistake. Hegel's social philosophy and ideals are constant, I am now prepared to maintain, not only throughout the Jena period, but in all probability throughout the earlier Frankfurt period as well. There is one concept of "political justice" implicit in all of his social writings, theoretical and practical, from his first venture into print as an anonymous pamphleteer in 1797 to the emergence of his great theoretical casting of accounts with his time in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* a decade later. And his firm grasp of this criterion of "justice" fairly surely guarantees that he already knew what was implied in 1802 when he wrote that the "keeping of the whole in the life possible for it . . . happens most necessarily, or rather

immediately, through the inner constitution of the estate"<sup>5</sup> as definitely as he did in 1805 (when he made the implication as clear as his philosophical obligation to stick to the rational recognition of the actual would allow).

It would seem therefore that in the end I must concur with Avineri's cheerful indifference about the lost systematic contexts to which the fragmentary and long unpublished remains originally belonged. This is not the case, however, for the supposition of coherence to which I have returned differs from the one that Avineri spontaneously adopted in a predictably Hegelian way. By taking the papers in their order, and seeking to understand each statement in its full context, so far as that context can be reconstructed, I believe that we can discover more about Hegel's unchanging concept of social justice than would ever be apparent to an observer who lumps all the statements together at the start.

Thus I do not dissent, and I hold that no one rationally can dissent from Avineri's claim that

the major difference [between Marx and Hegel] has, however, already been pointed out by Lukács: while Hegel sees alienation as a necessary aspect of objectification, Marx maintains that alienation does not reside immanently in the process of production itself, but only in its concrete historical conditions. For Marx, therefore, there exists the possibility of ultimate salvation, whereas the Hegel one will never be able to dissociate the cross from the rose of the present.<sup>6</sup>

I think that this "difference" between them is not mainly a matter of their different social situations and sympathies, but of differing speculative analyses of natural and spiritual necessity, applied to moral ideals of human life that are virtually identical. Of the two speculative analyses, I take Hegel's to be quite demonstrably the sounder. Hence I can sum up the difference within identity by saying that although both Hegel and Marx are Christian socialists, Hegel is less of a *believer* and, for that very reason, a better philosopher. (The Marxist ideal of a coming social millennium does, however, do more adequate justice to some aspects of the gospel of universal brotherhood, which Hegel can now be seen to have slighted unnecessarily. So the advantage is not quite *all* on Hegel's side; and perhaps the philosopher ought to take "belief"—or what Ernst Bloch called "the principle of hope"—a little more seriously than Hegel, with his violent antipathy to the optimistic moralism of Fichte, would ever allow.)

Turning now to the task of making out my case in due order, I must concede at once that we cannot be sure about Hegel's socioeconomic philosophy in the Frankfurt period, because all of the primary documents are lost to us. It was the great merit of Lukács that, although he conceded far too much to the romantic image of Hegel in this period established by

Wilhelm Dilthey, he grasped the significance of all the political and economic papers, of which we have only the most inadequate secondary accounts; and he made everyone see how different our view of the so-called early theological writings is bound to be when they are restored to the context of revolutionary political and economic theorizing in which they were born. When we read what remains to us with the proper awareness of what Hegel was trying to do, our inadequate reports about what is lost sometimes yield a more concrete significance than they appear to have on the surface. Thus, in the *Spirit of Christianity*, Hegel comments on the ideal communism of the Sermon on the Mount:

About the command . . . to cast aside care for one's life and to despise riches, as also about Matthew XIX, 23: "How hard it is for the rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven," there is nothing to be said; it is a litany pardonable only in sermons and rhymes, for such a comment is without truth for us. The fate of property has become too powerful for us to tolerate reflections on it, as if its abolition were thinkable for us.<sup>7</sup>

That "property" was regarded by Hegel as a "fate" is instructive. On the one hand it is an impediment to the freedom of the spirit (as we can learn from the fragment on "Love");<sup>8</sup> on the other hand, it is unavoidable. This is the fundamental disagreement between Hegel and Marx. Property, upon Hegel's view of it, quite simply cannot be abolished. But "fate" is a power with which we must be reconciled; the basic problem of Hegel's ethics (then and later) is to achieve a properly reverent attitude toward it.<sup>9</sup> So when Rosenkranz tells us that in his notes on Steuart's *Principles of Political Economy* (February–May, 1799), "Hegel fought against what was dead [in the mercantile system] with noble feeling, with a wealth of interesting examples, as he strove to save the *Gemüt* of man amidst the competition and mechanical interaction of labor and commerce,"<sup>10</sup> we must assume that although Hegel found many faults in Steuart's mercantilist doctrine, he regarded it as preferable to the irreconcilable form in which man's economic fate appears in Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*.

The general view has been that Hegel was not, at this date, familiar with *Wealth of Nations* at all. But this view is almost certainly wrong. It is plausible enough, as long as we can assume, as I used to, that Hegel depended on the German translation of Smith that appeared between 1796 and 1798 in Frankfurt and Leipzig. But the fact is that at the time of his death, he owned the Basel edition of the English text (1791); and in his earliest explicit reference to Smith (1804) he confuses the calculations in Smith's opening example of the pin factory in his own way (not in the way that Garve, the German translator, confused them). So there is every reason to think that he was using his English text in 1804. Once we put it in his

library at that date, the question why he acquired it, rather than the translation that had appeared in his local bookshops while he was in Frankfurt (at a time when he was deeply concerned about political economy and more comfortable for money than at any time in the next decade), can have only one likely answer. The only plausible assumption is that he bought the Basel edition for himself while he was a house-tutor in Switzerland (1793–1796). Thus he had Smith's *Wealth of Nations* at hand all the time he was working over Steuart, and he had probably read it long before he read Steuart (though we cannot be sure of that).<sup>11</sup>

So we must ask why Hegel preferred the economic theory of Steuart to that of Smith. It was Steuart's fate to be a pioneer, completely overshadowed even in his own time by a younger contemporary better attuned to the mind of the time. His *Principles* appeared in 1767, just nine years before the *Wealth of Nations*. Smith made no reference to it (though he probably profited from studying it). The reason why Hegel did not follow the fashion is simple, and it had already been remarked on by Steuart's reviewers. Steuart sought to advance the old science of "political economy" as first conceived and established by Plato and Aristotle. Smith, on the other hand, was inventing a new *natural* science of "economics." "Political economy," as Steuart conceived it, was a vital part of the great armory of rational statesmanship; the statesman must understand economic life and policy in order to secure the best life possible for his citizens. Smith's "economics," however, is founded on natural laws that operate to maximize wealth; so that for a political authority to have an economic *policy* (of a positive directive kind) can only inhibit what is generally desirable; political interference should be limited to the care and maintenance (and occasional repair) of the natural machinery of economic life. The thoughtful English merchants of the time did not need Smith to tell them that Steuart's "statesman" must be kept out of the engine shed. As soon as the *Principles* appeared one of them declared in an authoritative review:

We have no idea of a statesman having any connection with the affair, and we believe that the superiority which England has at present over all the world, in point of commerce, is owing to her excluding statesmen from the executive part of all commercial concerns.<sup>12</sup>

But Steuart's political conception of economics was, of course, just what attracted Hegel. For Hegel too was, from the first, a *political* economist. For him Adam Smith was the Newton of human affairs, analyzing the life of the social whole as a dead mechanism, just as Newton had already analyzed the solar system as a marvelous clockwork model operated by occult forces that must be rationally postulated, instead of recognizing it as a model of organic life. That Newton's model could be adapted to the study of human society was one of the most disastrous aspects of the *Principia* as "natural philoso-

phy." To study society as a mechanism driven by the forces of human need is to learn only about the needs of life, which bring the mechanism into existence, not about the potentialities of the good life, which the mechanism brings into existence. The mechanism of needs certainly exists, and the needs that drive it must be appreciated. They must even be "reverenced as fate," i.e., as the ineluctably necessary structure of life itself. But we reverence fate in order to enjoy our freedom. The object of studying economics is not just to understand how we are fated, but to comprehend society as an organism, and so "save the *Gemüt* of man" from the blind operation of the social mechanism. It was natural, therefore, for Hegel to begin with Steuart, who understood that the forces driving the economic mechanism were alive, and therefore plastic and subject to some degree of rational control; and to see Smith's theory only as the formulation of the essential problem that our nature poses for us, not as a triumphant demonstration that the problem will solve itself in the best possible way if we leave the natural forces to find their own spontaneous equilibrium. The natural forces of social life will not, in fact, do that. The natural dynamism that produces the wealth of nations is social dynamite. If we wish to maintain prosperity, we must not merely work industriously as individuals, we must think intelligently as a community.

The object of this communal labor of thought is the achievement of social justice. "Social justice" is the focal concept in Hegel's practical philosophy just as it is in that of Plato. The justice of fairness, which is the individual virtue that is vital in social relations, must derive its essential criteria of what is "fair" from the ideal harmony of the whole. What is fair is not generally or abstractly what is equal, but what is proportioned to the harmony of that whole, or what is required by and for the "living bond" that holds the whole together.

In every society, the sense of what is socially "right" (as what is requisite for its peaceful and effective maintenance) is necessarily present. The duty to do what is "right" in this sense does not rest on me simply as a rational individual. Not everyone has the same social duty, and no one has a duty that is uniquely his; one's social duty derives from one's social role, from one's being one of a group of individuals distinguished by their having the same determinate function or status in society (one that they all share and that others do not have). Thus the problem of defining social justice is the problem of securing a satisfied consensus about the duties (functions) and rights (rewards) of each determinate status.

A considerable degree of consensus about what the actual status system is must exist or there would not be a community at all. But the consensus is never a fully satisfied one. There are always *prima facie* grounds of some sort for protesting against being assigned to a certain status, or against the way in which that status is itself socially defined; indeed, a human society

must contain some statuses that are dissatisfying by definition. It is an axiom of the theory of social health, for example, that a child ought to want to change his status for that of a grown-up. It is no part of my present concern to expound the general theory of society as an organism, but this elementary example is important to my theme, because the greatest thinker of the generation before Hegel had defined the ideal of rational enlightenment as man's coming of age. The child perceives his own coming of age as desirable, because grown-ups at least appear to possess the freedom to choose between statuses, or to define for themselves what status and duties they will accept, whereas his own child status is defined for him partly by nature, and partly by arbitrary social authority. In the same way the status system of the unenlightened world was determined by the divine author of nature (and father of the human family) or by the arbitrary authority of long-established custom. A social world that had come of age must naturally want to throw off religion's parental control and work out ways of defining the standards of social justice for itself, instead of accepting what is customary. "Justice" for the future must depend on a consensus reached by rational deliberation, not on an unthinking acceptance of the "will of God" or the way of our fathers.

This is the black-and-white silhouette of the thought context in terms of which the appeal to "justice" in Hegel's earliest social writings must be interpreted. He has no theory of what the justified social structure will look like (or at least no theory is stated in the surviving manuscripts). He knows only that every customary structure must be submitted to criticism, and the necessary process of justification is one of communal deliberation. That society consists of different "estates" he takes for granted. But the "estates" have to be redefined, and whatever customary rights are not acceptable to the community as a deliberative council must be surrendered. Unless this is accepted, the forces of newly adult human self-consciousness will sweep everything away (as the revolution has already done in France) and begin again with a clean slate. Thus in his very first (anonymous) publication, he introduces his translation of Cart's *Confidential Letters* by citing the words of a Titan swept down into the Underworld by the Olympians in the very first political revolution of our Western tradition; "Learn *justice*, being warned [not to have contempt for the Gods]." Upon those who are deaf to this cry for justice, he adds, "their fate will smite hard."<sup>13</sup> He did not agree with Cart's Jacobin view that social stratification could and should be swept away.<sup>14</sup> But he did hold that "Justice is the unique criterion for deciding" what is untenable in the existing social structure; and he was quite prepared to terrorize all traditionalists into accepting this criterion, by directing attention to the great slate-cleaning operation that filled the first years of the revolution in France.<sup>15</sup>

This Girondin revolutionary commitment created an instructive contradiction in Hegel's practical program. The "justice" that he appealed to could be achieved only by a representative assembly of all estates in which Rousseau's "General Will" was genuinely dominant. But the general will could emerge in its requisite enlightened form only in an assembly of representatives for whom the traditional foundations of social justice were no longer valid. They must all alike know that they were there to formulate the judgment of the community, not to reaffirm the will of God or of their ancestors. For on either of these latter bases every social privilege that ought to be surrendered in the interest of "justice" would have an entrenched position. Because of this, Hegel's projected pamphlet, which announced the principle of enlightened "justice" on its title page—"That the magistrates should be chosen by the citizens"—came to the uncomfortable conclusion that "the essential thing is that the right of election should be placed in the hands of a body of enlightened and upright men independent of the court," since it was not "advisable to hand over the choice of its defender suddenly to an unenlightened mass of men, accustomed to blind obedience, and dependent on the impression of the moment."<sup>16</sup> On this view of things, the new social order could be established only under the aegis of a revolutionary army; Hegel's proposal was practically relevant to the situation in Mainz, but not to the summoning of the estates in Württemberg (even after a lapse of twenty-seven years). So his friends advised him not to publish his pamphlet, and he very sensibly accepted their advice.

Practical politics was never Hegel's forte. But the creation of "enlightenment" in the minds of "upright men independent of the court" was his lifelong concern. The whole subsequent evolution of his theory of the social estates is one long effort to articulate the concept of justice as a harmony of these estates. The classical model was, of course, Plato; and Plato is the most important influence on Hegel's theory of the social organism. But Plato produced only the undeveloped concept of the authority of reason.<sup>17</sup> In the developed or free social organism, there is nothing authoritarian. Every proper part of the organism governs itself. "The organic principle is freedom, the fact that the ruler is himself the rules."<sup>18</sup> Thus the identification and living organization of the "estates" as society's proper parts—which (in peacetime at least) must have a large measure of self-regulating autonomy—are vital to Hegel's theory. For these are the unit constituencies that must choose their own "magistrates" in the rationalized constitution of the new age that is dawning.

The "estate" is an economic entity. This must be, for it is the essential mediating term between the private interests that can only be aggregated into a "will of all" and the public interest that can only be expressed in a truly "general will." Without this mediation, the "general will" can only



have a negative, authoritarian, or repressive relation toward all private interests. If we attempt to realize the "general will" according to Rousseau's own recipe for its expression, we are bound to create the very "factions" whose elimination he regarded as essential, and thus to generate a climate of universal suspicion. The political expression of this is the Terror.<sup>19</sup> Before it can be reconciled into the positive universality of a community at peace with itself, private interest must be generalized into its proper species. If this can be done, the individual will and intellect will never directly appear in the arena of political deliberation at all. The general will gets formulated by a body of legislators who represent their "estates"; and since each estate is itself a community united by a specific social interest, it would be absurd for a Hegelian legislator to claim, as Burke did in his famous speech to the electors of Bristol, that "your representative . . . betrays instead of serving you if he sacrifices his judgment to your opinion." For his judgment is supposed to express as well as possible a consensus of interest, or a "will of all."

From this mediating function the essential character of a properly constituted estate necessarily follows. Hegel agreed almost completely with something else that Burke said in that same speech: "Parliament is not a congress of ambassadors from different and hostile interests . . . but . . . a deliberative assembly of one nation, with one interest that of the whole." Hegel almost agreed, but not quite; his own concept of the "estate" was designed to produce a congress of interests that were different without being essentially and necessarily hostile. Only through a congress of this kind is the transition from a will of all to a general will possible. If the interests to be summed are diametrically opposed, and hence necessarily hostile, because whatever is conceded to one side must be directly denied to (or subtracted from) the other, the birth of "faction" is unavoidable. We can only pass from a will of all that is implicitly general (because in each faction the members share the same interest distributively) to one that is explicitly tyrannical (because it arises from a preponderance of factions on one side of a balance).

Because he means to ensure the *Aufhebung* of faction—i.e., not to eliminate it but to guarantee that it will not break the "absolute bend" of the *Volk*—Hegel's "estates" are radically different from the "three orders" of society that we find in Adam Smith (or again in Marx) or from most of the "interest groups" of more recent democratic political theory. Hegel's estates are different because they must already have resolved class conflict before the political process can properly begin. This is the primary reason why each estate needs its own internal government. It must regulate not only the conditions of entry into its particular sphere of activity, and the conditions of the activity itself, but also the distribution of its rewards—and it must achieve a general consensus of support in all this. Then when the estates come together in their assembly they will be directly conscious of their interdependence and

complementarity. The economic estates that Hegel distinguishes are the primary producers (agriculture), the secondary producers (manufactures and trade), and the nonproducers (public service of all kinds).

The way in which a class of secondary producers naturally develops in a prosperous agricultural economy was remarked on already by Steuart (whose evolutionary or phenomenological approach to economic theory was another important ground for Hegel's natural predilection for his work). Steuart calls his two classes "farmers" and "free hands" initially; and generally "labourers" and "free hands" thereafter.<sup>20</sup> He subsequently distinguishes the "consumers" from these two types of producers;<sup>21</sup> and finally he adds the necessary though unproductive class of social defenders (i.e., soldiers).<sup>22</sup> The influence of his distinctions on the *System of Ethical Life* will be apparent to anyone who compares the texts carefully.

Adam Smith, by contrast, analyzes only the fully developed society; and he distinguishes his classes according to the type of monetary income that they live on. There are "those who live by rent, . . . those who live by wages, and . . . those who live by profit."<sup>23</sup> The universal concept specified by division in Smith's theory is "wealth"; in that of Steuart and Hegel it is "industry." Thus for Smith the continuing growth of an economy is vital to its health:

The wages of the labourer, it has already been shown, are never so high as when the demand for labour is continually rising, or when the quantity employed is every year increasing considerably. When this real wealth of the society becomes stationary, his wages are soon reduced to what is barely enough to enable him to bring up a family, or to continue the race of labourers. When the society declines, they fall even below this. The order of the proprietors may, perhaps, gain more by the prosperity of the society than that of labourers: but there is no order that suffers so cruelly from its decline.

For Steuart, on the other hand, the ideal condition of society is that of a stable economy with full employment. "*That number of husbandmen, therefore, is the best, which can provide food for all the state; and that number of inhabitants is the best, which is compatible with the full employment of every one of them.*"<sup>24</sup> Steuart's whole science is directed toward the regulation of population and its stabilization at the optimal level.<sup>25</sup> This goal is nowhere stated explicitly in Hegel's social theory, but it is implicit in everything he says about the government's responsibility for economic planning.

In Hegel's theory of the estates, it is the *ethos*—the virtue, or spirit—of the three modes of social life that is of primary importance.<sup>26</sup> The primary producers exhibit human virtue "raw" and undeveloped. The mediation of private and public interest is hardly possible for them, because it is hardly necessary. The conflict has not properly arisen. The peasant is aware only of

the interest of the natural community, the family. He has no purely private interest of his very own, and his relationship with the public interest is one of "trust" (*Vertrauen*). The peasant is—or should be—a free man, but he accepts the existing order of society as naturally given. Hegel seems to think of the peasant as essentially a tenant. He must go to his landowner for justice in peacetime; and he exhibits his "solid" virtue—his essential manliness—as a common soldier (with his noble lord as his officer) in war. Hegel's distinction between the primary level of finite "feeling" or reality and the reflective level of "infinity and ideality" (in the *System of Ethical Life*) shows that he fully appreciated "the difference between agriculture exercised as a trade and as a direct means of subsisting" that Steuart emphasized.<sup>27</sup> And since that distinction is introduced by Hegel within the sphere of natural ethics, it is evident that he conceives the peasants as "traders" even before the transition to properly political society. But peasants never develop a properly commercial attitude toward their own patrimony; and the communal sharing of labor—which is basic to its rational division—is alien to the natural mode of life of peasants, and is imposed on them only by force (in the institution of serfdom.)<sup>28</sup> But because they do identify with their land, they will fight for it; so serfdom can never be more than a transitional phase in the evolution of political society.<sup>29</sup> And because of his basic manliness, and his distrust of the civil world, which he does not properly understand, and whose values he can never completely share, the peasant remains as the maker of violent revolution, when the dialectic of bourgeois society finally drives him to it.<sup>30</sup> After his revolution, the peasant's situation cannot, with respect to *Bildung*, remain as undeveloped as it is in Hegel's logical analysis. But just how the peasant is to become a fully self-conscious participant in the expressing of the general will is for history, not for philosophy, to decide. All that can be said about it, in terms of conceptual necessity, is that the political incorporation of agriculture is bound to be regional; the development of representative democracy on the basis of local residential constituencies since 1776 and 1789 reflects the aristocratic bias of the American and the peasant bias of the French revolutions. This agrarian regionalism is quite inappropriate for articulating the voice of Steuart's "industry"—as any observer of the struggles of central and local governments for control of a nation's industrial resources is soon forced to recognize.

The absolute or universal estate is less interesting because it is identical with the concept in its full development. This is the final cause in Hegel's system. So far as we can all be brought to see that social justice is a regulative ideal, and is not finally achievable, since the perpetual awareness of injustice in some shape is a rational necessity of free self-conscious existence (so that not justice as Plato thought, but injustice, is itself

"just")—so far as *Bildung* can be universalized as this philosophical insight, we shall all be members of the universal class. The dawn of the atomic age makes it necessary to believe in the possibility of this philosophical millennium since the instinctive (violent) reaction of absolute freedom against perceived social injustice could now lead to a Terror that would be the Armageddon of eschatological prophecy.

The universal estate contains in itself no principle of further dialectical development or revolutionary change. But this estate is self-transforming—it develops from an "absolute" estate of soldiers into a "universal" estate of philosophers. The absolute estate is, to begin with, the military aristocracy, which is the master in the "natural" relation of lordship and bondage. But as soon as this natural nobility begins to govern a differentiated society (one that contains Steuart's "free hands") it must absorb the "priests and elders" who are the organic governing body of the "free hands." (Members of the military aristocracy are, of course, themselves "priests and elders" for the undifferentiated or "natural" society.)<sup>31</sup> Thus as the "absolute government" they cease to be a distinct "estate"<sup>32</sup> and become the "universal estate"—which will be completely "universal" if and when the "general will" is ever perfectly articulated and self-conscious.<sup>33</sup> And when Hegel offers his systematic analysis of the structure of the "universal estate"—as distinct from the evolutionary or phenomenological view of it that is dominant earlier—the professional soldiers (*Soldatenstand*) come not at the beginning but at the end of its logical development. With their devotion unto death, they show us the way into the "kingdom of heaven," the realm of "absolute" (or free) *Bildung* in Art, Religion, and Philosophy. In spite of his bourgeois prejudice about the naturally given limits of peasant educability, or for that matter his distinctively personal prejudice about the natural limits of female educability, I take it to be clear beyond doubt that Hegel conceived of that world of Absolute Spirit as a universal democracy. His conviction that the *Volk* must possess Homer (at the hands of Voss) and philosophy (at his own hands) along with the Bible (at Luther's) in its own tongue, native and unadulterated, is quite inexplicable on any other basis (however quaint his conviction may appear in view of the form in which he actually bequeathed "philosophy" as a "possession" to his people). The "noble" warriors lay the foundations of constitutional government; and they are the seedbed of the *Gemeingeist* because they display for us the totality of self-commitment that "life in the *Volk*" is. But in the truly free constitution each of us "lives in the *Volk*" as a member of his own *Stand*.<sup>34</sup> Hegel thought that this noble seedbed was a permanent part of the order of things, because the sense of "life in the *Volk*" could not be maintained against the divisive tendencies of bourgeois distributive justice (and injustice) without periodic wars. It seems rather that the evolution of Reason as

Understanding has taken the security of this pendulum of Nature away from us; either Art, Religion, and Philosophy must suffice to teach us what political justice is in the universal community, or we shall perish.

This brings us finally to distributive justice, the virtuous concern of the bourgeoisie. This is the moment of judgment, the middle between the conceptual "solidarity" (or substance) of the peasantry and the syllogistic return to dynamic equilibrium in the universal class. Instead of wanting to die justly, as the absolute (military) or universal (cultured) estate does, this estate has living justly (or righteously) as its distinctive virtue. Now we are in the world of recognized or legal status, in which all agents are persons with defined or definable rights. The highest public function of this estate is the administration of justice, and the legal profession is just that part of it that belongs immediately and necessarily to the universal class (others do so, of course, through being selected to bear communal responsibilities or make communal decisions and regulations).

This is the world for which the *Wealth of Nations* is a sort of bible, for the God of this world is wealth; the maintenance of formal righteousness in all dealings (or honesty in word and deed) is also the appointed form of worship of the "Mammon of Unrighteousness." Even Adam Smith recognizes the danger that his perfect mechanism of natural competition may be prevented from producing general prosperity by selfish conspiracies to monopolize trade; and he also recognizes that the same mechanism that produces general prosperity distributes it in an essentially unfair way.<sup>35</sup>

So far as Hegel found inspiration in any economic source for his analysis of the evils of industrial capitalism it has to have come from Adam Smith.<sup>36</sup> For Steuart, with his ideal of full employment, does not think of the labor market simply as a competitive one; and he is quite oblivious of the impending effects of the technological revolution.<sup>37</sup> His long residence abroad and his interest in social policy freed Steuart from the Anglo-Saxon obsession with private profit; but, by the same token, Smith's close observation of the world of those merchants who were so resolutely determined to keep all "statesmen" out of their affairs, together with an extra decade of industrial development in their methods of production, gave him a crucial advantage in the task of identifying what was logically distinctive in modern industry. His book opens with a famous chapter "Of the Division of Labour," and with an equally famous example (which he says "has been very often taken notice of") taken from "a very trifling manufacture . . . the trade of the pin-maker." This example made an immense impression upon Hegel. He refers to it in his first analysis of how the mechanization of labor diminishes both its economic and its experiential value;<sup>38</sup> and again in the margin of his discussion of the rationalization of labor as "actual spirit" in 1805.<sup>39</sup>

The context of this second reference confirms—if any confirmation is thought to be necessary—the hypothesis that Smith's recognition of the right starting point for economic analysis is what lies behind Hegel's identification of the division of labor as the explicit (though still formal) universal in the second *Potenz* of the *System of Ethical Life*.<sup>40</sup> Steuart habitually speaks of agriculture as "labor," and generally refers to the modes of secondary production as "manufacture" or "work."<sup>41</sup> Sometimes he uses "labor" to embrace the whole genus of productive activity (as when he speaks of the "market for goods or labor"), but generally he prefers the term "industry" for this. It is clear that the reason for this distinction is that he regards primary production as essentially unskilled (i.e., it involves no skills that were not originally quite general in their distribution), while the secondary producers are artisans with special skills. Hegel accepts this distinction likewise in his conception of the natural economy (though he distinguishes the skills of stockbreeding from the mechanical labor of tilling the soil).<sup>42</sup> But he also recognizes that the rational division of labor abolishes this natural distinction and makes all the special skills of natural society into a universal possession. Anyone can learn, quite rapidly, to mind the machine. This is what makes rationalized labor so deadening. Whether Steuart's insistence that the minimum subsistence that must be guaranteed for the unskilled laborer should also not be allowed to rise beyond that minimum sharpened Hegel's perception of how the mechanism of a competitive labor market actually tends to push the minimum ever lower, I am not sure. But anyone reading Smith with the memory of Steuart's remark (in the same context) that "The poor slave . . . who gets no more than his subsistence at all times, is in the situation of the poor laboring horse, who is fed with the same provender, let it be dear or cheap" or of his reflection that foot soldiers manage to subsist below the minimal level of the day laborers because they generally do not marry,<sup>43</sup> would be able to recognize that when everyone is equally reduced to the status of the day laborer, the situation of free labor can easily become worse than that of the slave or the horse (whose replacement is an extra cost). At the least it is certain that any student of Steuart's "subsistence level" theory would know why, once the economy was rationalized through the division of labor, Steuart's confidence that "the industrious free-man must share in the profits of him who employs him" was ill founded; Smith's comment would ring a bell here:

Though the interest of the labourer is strictly connected with that of the society, he is incapable either of comprehending that interest or of understanding its connection with his own. His condition leaves him no time to receive the necessary information, and his education and habits are commonly such as to render him unfit to judge even though he was fully informed.<sup>44</sup>



For, precisely because of the "condition" that it puts him in, the interest of society in the accumulation of wealth is indeed strictly (but negatively) connected with the laborer's interest. That is what Hegel sees and says in all of his Jena manuscripts.

For this reason, the intervention of Steuart's "statesman" in the world of civil society is a logical necessity if there is to be a society at all. In any labor market, private interest is essentially antithetic, not identical. Thus the bourgeois estate does not naturally or necessarily form an organic whole; it is, rather, inorganic, and the "justice" upon which it prides itself is the justice of death, or of an inevitable appeal to higher judgment. The peasant estate is a natural whole, which will work out its own salvation, and resolve its own self-alienation or antithesis (serfdom), in the normal course of its existence (as long as we are dealing with communities small enough to be continually at war with others for survival, the Athenian constitution will emerge, and that of Sparta will perish).<sup>45</sup> The universal estate is a spiritual whole, i.e., by definition it is one that has already worked out its salvation. But the estate of "righteousness" is a life-and-death struggle in which death must triumph, at the last. Out of its own mouth this estate is condemned, for while professing justice, it *does* only what is unjust.

Obviously, if there is to be any stability in our social existence, some human court must take the place of this ultimate judgment of God. The "absolute government" must be enshrined in a system of constitutional rights and must maintain a balance of the estates such that the mortally organic estate will stay alive and not degenerate into the "chemical" polarity of Plato's "two cities" of the rich and the poor. On the one hand, the formal ideal of justice as "honesty" must be linked with the political ideal of self-sacrifice for the preservation of the community. The bourgeoisie must be both patriotic and charitable. It must not think of its taxes as the payment of public servants and mercenaries, but as the subsistence allowance for a form of life that is genuinely higher than its own, because it maintains the presence of an ideal of "nobility"; and the favored postulants of Mammon must give generously both for public causes and for private charity. On the other hand, the economic activity of the bourgeoisie must be so regulated that these formal or symbolic gestures toward the higher values of political justice and living charity do not appear as a hollow sham. Before the "system of justice" can be left to the "formally universal estate"—the legally constituted authorities of civil society—the universal system of needs must itself "become a government."<sup>46</sup>

The object of governmental economic policy is the same in Hegel as in Steuart: to ensure full employment and a secure livelihood for everyone. But his ideal is less Spartan, more Athenian than Steuart's (or if you like, it is German Lutheran rather than Scottish Calvinist). For whereas Steuart



advocates the subsidized export of agricultural produce whenever the circumstances of his "day laborers" threaten to become too easy,<sup>47</sup> Hegel is sensitive both to the way in which general social expectations determine what a decent livelihood is in every economic status, and to the barbarizing tendency of being driven to labor by sheer economic need. "Respectability" is the best name for the organic principle of virtue of his bourgeois estate, and it is respectability (rather than simply money) that every member must be educated to want and have a fair opportunity to achieve and to enjoy.

In the *System of Ethical Life* this is a problem that the government resolves as well as possible with external means. "Inequality of wealth is absolutely necessary"; "the individual who is tremendously wealthy becomes a *Macht*"; and the relation of mastery and service on the basis of *Lebensmacht* is natural and inevitable. When Hegel says that in the struggle for the means of life the good is forgotten ("The mass of wealth, the pure universal, the absence of wisdom, is the *An sich*") and "the absolute bond of the people . . . has vanished," he seems to be saying that in spite of the best efforts of wise statesmanship, the social system is inevitably mortal.<sup>48</sup>

In the first *Philosophy of Spirit* this natural standpoint is decisively transcended. That Reason exists in Nature (which serves as the body and instrument of rational and second nature) is denied. The human world now embodies Reason only by emerging out of nature into spiritual freedom. Thus social history is not, as Aristotle assumed, the unfolding of human nature as the highest dimension of nature generally; it is the phenomenology of spirit, not as finite, but as *absolute* spirit. For our purposes, this speculative development is significant in two ways. First, the existence of civil society as a system of natural recognition, based on differential *Lebensmacht*, is irrelevant. Law, and legal recognition, presuppose the emergence of the consciousness of what rational freedom is, through a struggle for recognition. In the second place, the development of mechanized industry is analyzed in a way that makes the economic struggle evident. The manuscript breaks off with "property," which is the object of that struggle. There is no sign that Hegel intended to draw any explicitly revolutionary conclusions (which would be out of place in his conception of systematic theory at all times). But the working of the economy is now called a "life of the dead body, that moves itself within itself, one which ebbs and flows in its motion blindly, like the elements, and which requires continual strict dominance and taming like a wild beast."<sup>49</sup> Adam Smith is now the visible inspiration of the account; but this political response accentuates Hegel's commitment to Stuart's ideal of economic policy.

The "life" of the dead body is gravity. Hence in the second *Philosophy of Spirit*, where the logical structure of concept, judgment, and syllogism, familiar in the mature *Philosophy of Right* is applied to the organization of

social theory as a whole for the first time, Hegel displays Smith's world of economic acquisition as a Newtonian gravitational system. Once more the revolutionary dialectic of wealth and poverty produced by the rational division of labor is summed up (more briefly than in the lectures of 1803/4 but in the same trenchant terms). Hegel explicitly refers to it as "the extremest shattering (*höchste Zerrissenheit*) of the will—inward outrage and hatred"; but he says nothing now about the "strict dominance and taming (of the economy) like a wild beast." The policies of governmental control that he mentions are all such as would need to be continued in a syndicalist economy (the search for new markets and for new employment for those thrown out of work by developments in technology, for example).<sup>50</sup> It is clear that he is still wrestling with the lessons of the French Revolution, and that the focal importance of personality in his legal theory represents his formulation of the "rights of man and citizen." I shall argue now, finally, that he actually looked forward to a world in which labor power itself would no longer be marketed.

This supposed world of his hopes will not have a centralized socialist economy, for that would not be "organic" (self-governing). Far from using the language of "dominance and taming," he now says that government interference—even the taxation system—should be as slight as possible.<sup>51</sup> The economic sphere is one in which personal freedom and initiative must be allowed to display itself. The commonwealth should not own property, but be supported by taxes—because (however insignificant it manages to make them) its expenses must be accounted for.

The protection of property and securing of contracts is the primary function of state authority in the judicial system—which Hegel now treats as an extension of the state's economic functions. The state-authority must look first to the problem of general social health, and advance from that to the task of securing what Aristotle called distributive justice. But Hegel once more acknowledges the difficulties of interpreting contracts and applying laws, the endlessness of occasions for dispute and of distinction in judgment. Also, the larger the body of applied law grows, the more difficult it is for anyone except a specialist to acquire the requisite knowledge of it. For this reason the spirit loses its presence.<sup>52</sup>

Both the fate of the *ancien régime* and the decadence of the German Empire come to mind here. How are we to choose between these possible outcomes? The answer is that we do not need to choose, since the human community does not really die, either naturally or violently. Its death, like that of the phoenix, is a rebirth. Thus the crucial point is that Hegel goes on at once to say that the procedure of justice is "almost more essential than the law itself." And in this connection he reverts to the revolutionary dialectic of rich and poor in what seems to me to be a conclusive way. For he points

out that the more complex the law becomes, the more expensive it is to go to law. So there comes to be one law for the rich and another for the poor, simply because the rich have access to legal remedies while the poor, whose need is greater, do not. It is difficult now not to believe that Hegel's criticism of the acquisitive society rests on a concept of human economic independence, which he has consciously formulated. In other words, he is expecting a social revolution, and his economic and judicial "syllogisms" require a conclusion that he knows how to write, but must be enacted by the world spirit before it can become the concern of the philosopher.<sup>53</sup>

That the anonymous pamphleteer of 1797 is still very much alive in Hegel—and that he might speak more plainly about the inevitable need for social reconstruction if it were safe to do so—is shown by one remark in his transition from the sphere of civil law to that of political sovereignty. Discussing the "community, the living *Volk*" in its first aspect as the "Commonwealth," he remarks how it "condemns a mass of men to savagery (*Rohheit*), to being worn out (*Abstumpfung*) in labor—and poverty, in order to let others accumulate wealth, so that it can take this wealth away from them," i.e., in taxes. Heavy taxes, he says, make this situation bearable, but "Aristocrats who pay no taxes stand in the gravest danger of losing it (wealth) by violence."<sup>54</sup>

When we come to the explicit discussion of the "estates," Hegel's silences speak even more eloquently. He first presents the solid world of the comfortable worthies of the city guilds and of commerce, as if their system of recognized status were as stable as it takes itself to be when it walks abroad "outside the City Gate" of Goethe's Frankfurt on the Sabbath.<sup>55</sup> But behind this stable facade is not the soil and the cycle of the seasons, but the labile fluidity of money and the changes and chances of business. A city worthy is worth just what he owns. We find out what this is in the market, where the commercial class forms the middle between the two great categories of producers, the peasants and the artisans of the guilds.

Logically the factory worker belongs to the bourgeois class. But Hegel delays all mention of him until we come to the monetary product of the whole process, and the feedback reaction that the market economy has on the *Gesinnung* of everyone involved.<sup>56</sup> And he speaks then of the *Elend* (misery) of a "class" (*Klasse*) not of an "estate" (*Stand*). There is no mention of mere laborers on the one hand, or of mere financiers on the other, in his structural analysis of the system of property gravitation. From Hegel's discussion of "recognized status," we know that his bourgeois society is a mechanized and factory-based one. The rationalization of labor, culminating in the arrival of machines, marks the end of feudal industry for Hegel. So the class structure he describes—peasants, burghers, and merchants, everyone being by implication an independent proprietor—contains in each

case its own internal antithesis. In the case of the peasant proprietors, the antithesis (serfdom) is clearly on its way out. In the other estates the antithesis—the urban proletariat—is waxing rather than waning (as the first Philosophy of Spirit showed). But the implicit destiny is surely the same. For what the work of the “middle” estate brings to light is that the *object of all this life and work is to make money*. The “disposition” of commerce is not to be as comfortable and self-satisfied as peasants and guildsmen alike, but to be “just” with the grasping honesty of Ebenezer Scrooge. So the “disposition” of the factory worker upon whose misery (*Elend*) the most advanced aspect of the system of production rests needs no elaboration.

The conclusion seems to be obvious. The political revolution that is already in progress is the necessary prelude to a socioeconomic one by which the marketing of labor will be halted. Hegel's confidence of this rested on his conviction that the drive toward family independence was part of the order of nature. That this order itself could be distorted by the rational mechanisms of law and economics he did not foresee. But then, he did not foresee the retreat from Moscow or the Battle of Waterloo either.<sup>57</sup>

But if Hegel believed that capitalist accumulation must be brought to an end, because it was the blind movement of a dead machine driven by living energies that ought properly to be rationally self-conscious and self-governing, why did he not say so? The answer is that, so far as it was appropriate for a systematic thinker to say so, he did say so. He did not make his doctrine quite as explicit as he might have done, probably out of simple prudence. We should always remember how Fichte, the most important philosopher still alive after 1804, had lost his professorship a few years earlier. We should also remember that Hegel, who was still a virtually unknown thinker struggling to *get* a professorship, heartily abominated Fichte's utopian pretensions. It is not the philosopher's function to say how things ought to be; his task is to make explicit the rational structure implicit in the way they actually are. This Hegel did. He showed what aspects of the social structure were stable in fact, and coherent in consciousness (i.e., the belief structures were consistent with the functioning process); and he showed what aspects of the social structure were not stable, but in process and why.

But, of course, it was also part of his concern to show that social life must always be in process. “Distributive justice” is in itself dialectical, in a way that he analyzed brilliantly in the *Phenomenology*.<sup>58</sup> The ideal of equal treatment conflicts with the ideal that everyone should have what he needs. Hence in any situation of scarcity there will always be dispute about what distribution is best and fairest. Does it follow therefore that Hegel as a philosopher had no view about the dialectic of riches and poverty as it existed in his time? My contention is that this is the wrong conclusion to

draw from his antipathy to utopian thinking and his convincing analysis of the mistake implicit in the socialism of such thinkers as Fichte and William Godwin. The philosopher cannot tell the statesman how to solve the problems of social justice. For what he knows is that to solve it in one form is always and necessarily to pose it in another. So "what to do now?" must always be a problem for moral decision. Nevertheless the philosopher can show all of us, as moral agents, how a problem must be posed if it is to receive a moral solution at all. This is the point of Hegel's adherence to Steuart's perspective in political economy. He knew Adam Smith's work, and he fully recognized the superiority of the analysis of the mechanized economy that it contains. But he also saw that to regard economics as the natural science of wealth is to surrender our human responsibilities.

Herein lies his superiority over Marx. Marx despised utopian socialism too; but in relying on the economic process to produce a "classless" society he fell back himself into the rational moralism of the Enlightenment. What the "classless society" means in practice, Hegel showed negatively in his analysis of the Terror, and positively in the critique of Fichte's "machine state" (in which "the police know pretty well where every citizen is at any time of day and what he is doing").<sup>59</sup> That we all now live in this kind of "machine state"—whether "capitalist" or "Marxist" in its orientation—is a direct result of the "trust" we have all shared in "the universal without wisdom." The socialist societies have *made* that universal without wisdom "become a government"—but only as a self-conscious tyranny. Nonsocialist societies have *let* it become a tyranny, which their social critics have forced into self-consciousness. Hegel's conception of freedom as the organic principle logically requires that every function in the economy should be self-governing, and that the "universal government" should emerge from that self-articulation, while the "absolute government" (the sovereign power) is concerned only to maintain the organic principle. What this presupposes is that every effective member in the community is a proprietor. The "class" of day laborers is not an estate because they own nothing on which to work and must sell their labor power. This means that they are wage slaves. They are not an estate of realm any more than the slaves were in the natural communities of old times. How the statesman is to incorporate them into society Hegel does not presume to say. But what it means for them to be incorporated, he does say. Only a society in which men own the means of their subsistence can be a community of moral agents. They must own that means neither as a political community nor as an assembly of stockholders, but rather in the way in which the artisan is accorded absolute ownership of his tools of trade in the Magna Carta. In other words, in a factory economy there must be factory cooperatives. How this is to be brought about is not the philosopher's business to decide. He can only show



why society will not be economically rational until it is brought about. Nothing that has happened since 1789 seems to me to have shown that this connection, logically enshrined in the axiomatic roles accorded to "property" and "personality" in the "Real Philosophy" of 1805 (and in the *Philosophy of Right*), is mistaken; on the contrary, everything seems to confirm it. The actual has shown itself to be "rational" in the way that Hegel claimed; and in the process our lack of "wisdom" has been demonstrated.

## NOTES

1. *Gesammelte Werke* VI, ed. Rheinisch-Westfaelischen Akademie der Wissenschaften (Hamburg; F. Meiner, 1968), p. 321; Hegel, *System of Ethical Life*, eds. H. S. Harris and T. M. Knox (Albany: SUNY Press, 1979), p. 247. Avineri (pp. 93–94) has accidentally attached this passage to a quotation from the second *Philosophy of Spirit* of 1805/6.
2. *System der Sittlichkeit*, ed. G. Lasson, in Hegel, *Schriften Zur Politik* (Leipzig: Meiner, 1923), pp. 491–92; Harris and Knox, pp. 170–71.
3. See Lasson, *System der Sittlichkeit*, pp. 450–51; Harris and Knox, pp. 133–34.
4. *Gesammelte Werke* VIII, 244, 10–22. My translation is slightly more literal than Avineri's (*Hegel's Theory of the Modern State*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972, p. 97) partly because I have augmented the text only minimally, and partly because I wanted to make the controlling presence of the analogy with Newtonian gravitation as clear as possible.
5. Lasson, *System of Ethical Life*, p. 452; Harris and Knox, p. 171.
6. Avineri, p. 94, ng32.
7. Hegel, *Theologische Jugendschriften*, ed. H. Nohl (Tübingen: Mohr, 1907), p. 273; Knox, p. 221.
8. Nohl, pp. 381–82; Hegel, *Early Theological Writings*, ed. T. M. Knox (Chicago, 1948; reprinted, U. of Penn. Press, Philadelphia, 1971, p. 221); Knox, p. 308.
9. *Thesis IX, Hegel Erste Druckschriften*, ed. G. Lasson, (Leipzig: F. Meiner, 1928), p. 404.
10. K. Rosenkranz, *Leben Hegels* (Berlin, 1844) repr. Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, Darmstadt, 1963, p. 86.
11. For the details on the Basel edition of Smith see *Gesammelte Werke* VI, 384–85 (note to 323, 10–16). Chamley's plausible reasoning in favor of Hegel's having used the Tübingen translation of Steuart (*Hegel-Studien* III, 1965, 238) must be mistaken if the record of the auction catalogue of Hegel's library at the *Hegel Archiv* is correct. Their listing shows "Hamburg, 1766" [i.e., 1769] for Steuart's *Principles*. This tends to strengthen Chamley's not very conclusive arguments that Hegel did not read Steuart's work before 1797. (Tübingen was the obvious place for him to have obtained Steuart's work before he went to Frankfurt; but in Tübingen he would naturally have bought the *Tübingen* translation. In the more cosmopolitan bookshops of Frankfurt he could, presumably, have found either translation. In Bern the Tübingen translation would certainly have been easier to come by.)
12. *Critical Review*, XXIII (1767): 412 (quoted in Sir James D. Steuart, *An Inquiry into the Principles of Political Economy*, abridged ed. by A. S. Skinner (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1966, I, XLVI–XLVII).

13. J. Hoffmeister, ed., *Dokumente Zu Hegels Entwicklung* (Stuttgart: Frommann, 1936), p. 348.
14. Hence he did not translate Cart's first letter in which this Republican ideal is expressed.
15. See the surviving fragment of the introduction to his pamphlet on the Württemberg Estates Assembly of 1797, Lasson (1923) pp. 150-53; Hegel, *Political Writings*, eds. T. M. Knox and Z. A. Pelczynski (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965).
16. See the summary account given by R. Haym, *Hegel und seine Zeit* (Berlin, 1857); repr. G. Olms, Hildesheim, 1962, p. 66.
17. In the immediate (or natural) realization of the bare concept, there is a dictatorship of reason, because no middle term has yet developed. This has obvious relevance to the practical need for a military dictatorship in the establishment of the "new order" that Hegel wanted both for Germany and for his native Württemberg.
18. Lasson, *System der Sittlichkeit*, p. 496 (Harris and Knox, p. 174).
19. The first germ of Hegel's famous analysis of the Terror of 1793 is to be found in the theory of "the absolute government" in the *System der Sittlichkeit*: "The absolute government is only not formal [*formell*] because it presupposes the difference of the estates and so is truly the supreme government. *Without this presupposition the whole might of reality falls into a clump* (no matter how the clump might otherwise ramify internally) and this barbarian clump would have at its apex its equally barbarian power undivided and without wisdom. In the clump there cannot be any true and objective difference, and what was to hover over its internal differences is a pure nothing. For the absolute government, in order to be the absolute Idea posits absolutely the endless movement of the absolute concept. In the latter there must be differences and, because they are in the concept, universal and infinite, they must therefore be systems. And in this way alone is an absolute government and absolute living identity possible, but born into appearance and reality." (Lasson, pp. 482-83; Harris and Knox, p. 162; my italics).
20. *Principles* (ed. Skinner), pp. 43, 47, 58, 93-95, 129-32 (for the designation "farmers" or "husbandmen"); pp. 47, 57, 62, 154-55, 340-41 (for the equally frequent distinction between "labourers" and "free hands"—in the first of these passages "free hands" are also called "manufacturers").
21. *Principles* (ed. Skinner), pp. 68-70, 300-301.
22. *Principles* (ed. Skinner), p. 301.
23. *Wealth of Nations* (London: Everyman, 1:230).
24. *Principles* (ed. Skinner), p. 93 (the italics are Stuart's).
25. Compare, for instance, *Principles*, pp. 68, 300-302.
26. Stuart talks much of the "spirit" of the people as that which sets the boundaries of what is possible for the statesman; but he is also concerned in places to point out the social value of the typical ethos of a social class (see, for example, the comparison of the noble ethos of "glory" with the bourgeois ethos of "gain," *Principles*, pp. 70-72). Smith is more concerned about the degree of conscious understanding possessed by his different "orders." But he is surprisingly confident that the interest of the landlord must coincide with that of the community. Hence he anticipates Hegel's contrast between the noble and the bourgeois ethos even more completely than Stuart (see *Wealth of Nations*, 1:230-32).
27. *Principles*, p. 92.



28. Lasson, *System der Sittlichkeit*, p. 469 (Harris and Knox, p. 150).
29. In the *System of Ethical Life*, the "lordship-bondage" relation is treated as natural, and the "struggle for honor" occurs only between families and tribes that already include servants in bondage. The importance of universal bondage in the translation from the natural societies of Greece to the universal community of Christendom only began to occupy Hegel's attention in 1805. But he always maintained that political freedom depended on the capacity of individuals to identify with their family, hearth, and land. Thus the distrustfulness of "trust" (in the *System of Ethical Life*) reappears as absolute *Eigensinn* in the more phenomenological "First Philosophy of Spirit" (see *Gesammelte Werke* 7:296; Harris and Knox, pp. 227–28); and the "struggle for recognition" is there analyzed for the first time as necessary for the great transition to the political society as based on the command recognition of legal status (*Gesammelte Werke* 6:307–15; Harris and Knox, pp. 235–42).
30. So far as I can see, Hegel never alludes directly to the role of the peasants in the French Revolution. But his whole theory makes them the natural source of violent rebellion. Marx was too much influenced by Hegel's insistence on the primitive and undeveloped character of the peasant consciousness, and did not appreciate (perhaps because most of the documents were not available to him) the essentially volcanic character of peasant "solidity" in Hegel's theory. But Lenin and Mao would have done better to study Hegel and the French Revolution than to try to adapt the Marxist theory of revolution as a rational political process to peasant conditions. The bourgeois revolution need not come violently at all, but even if it does, it ought not to be followed by an extended period of cultural servitude (or *Bildung*) as a peasant revolution (which must, in the order of nature, come first) has to be. *Bildung* is the precondition of a bourgeois revolution; in spite of 1789 we are still undergoing it; in devoting his life to it, Marx was only carrying the same torch that history knocked out of Hegel's hands in 1814.
31. Compare Lasson, *System der Sittlichkeit* (1923), p. 480; Harris and Knox, p. 160.
32. Compare Lasson, *System der Sittlichkeit*, p. 483 (Harris and Knox, p. 162).
33. That this is the goal of social development is first clearly stated in Lasson, *System der Sittlichkeit*, p. 496 (Harris and Knox, pp. 174–75); compare the comment about "democracy," Lasson, p. 498 (Harris and Knox, p. 177). The goal does not have to be stated in the later systematic presentation, because the standpoint of "nature" is now transcended from the start (*Gesammelte Werke* 8:214, 22–27), and Hegel is concerned throughout with the order of human society in its self-conscious freedom. In this context the goal is directly expressed by the designation of what was previously the "absolute estate" as the "universal estate," and by making the professional soldiers (*Soldatenstand*) the middle term between this estate of civil servants and the realm of free culture (art, religion, and philosophy), which provides citizenship with its ultimate meaning (*Gesammelte Werke* VIII, 270, 14–277, 6).
34. *Gesammelte Werke* VIII, 276, 1–177, 6. This is the promised elucidation of the "capacity for an organic absolute intuition" mentioned in the quotation above.
35. See, for instance, *Wealth of Nations*, 1:230–32. The essential admission of the distributive unfairness of a free-trade economy comes in the quotation given earlier. The admission that the god of the capitalist is really Mammon is as follows: "The interest of the dealers, however, in any particular branch of trade or manufactures, is always in some respects different from, and even opposite

to, that of the public. To widen the market and to narrow the competition, is always the interest of the dealers."

36. Raymond Plant has correctly pointed out that the source of Hegel's insight into the life-improving effect of mechanization upon human labor is almost certainly Schiller's *Aesthetic Letters*—see "Economic and Social Integration in Hegel's Political Philosophy," in D. P. Verene, ed., *Hegel's Social and Political Thought* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1980), p. 79 (and *Aesthetic Letters*, VI, 7, ed. by Wilkinson and Willoughby, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967 pp. 34–35; or by Snell, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1959).
37. Thus about wages he can write:

Let therefore subsistence be ever so cheap, the free man will insist upon wages in proportion to the value of his work, when brought to market. Should his employer tell him, that because subsistence is at a low price he must therefore work cheaper, he will tell his employer that since on this account he sells no cheaper to his customers, neither will he work cheaper for him; and his argument is good.

At the bottom of the scale he admits competitive pressure:

In every industrious society, the lowest class is frequently found reduced to the barely necessary. The competition among themselves obtain employment at any rate, produces this effect; and competition must be allowed its free course. (*Principles*, p. 401)

But he does not mean to allow competition a free course nevertheless. He is (indirectly) a defender of the minimum wage:

the best, and indeed the only way to judge of reasonable prices, is to compare, as I have said, the gains of the lower classes with the price of the shortest subsistence. (p. 403)

About machines he says that where there is a perfectly balanced economy, their introduction is to be deprecated because they can only upset it. But:

The present situation of every country in Europe is so widely distant from this degree of perfection, that I must consider the introduction of machines, and every method of augmenting the produce or assisting the labor, and ingenuity of man, as of the greatest utility. Why do people wish to augment population, but in order to compass these ends? Wherein does the effect of a machine differ from that of new inhabitants?

As agriculture, exercised as a trade, purges the land of idle mouths, and pushes them to a new industry which the state may turn to her own advantage; so does a machine introduced into a manufacture, purge off hands which then become superfluous in that branch, and which may quickly be employed in another. (pp. 123–24)

38. *Gesammelte Werke* VI, 323; Harris and Knox, p. 248.
39. *Gesammelte Werke* VIII, 224, 23–26.
40. Lasson, pp. 432–33; Harris and Knox, pp. 116–18.
41. Compare especially the passages cited in note 19 above.
42. Lasson, *System der Sittlichkeit*, p. 423 (Harris and Knox, p. 108).
43. *Principles*, pp. 400–401. (The following quotation about "the industrious free-man" is in this same context.)
44. *Wealth of Nations*, 1:230–31 (my italics). (Smith himself, though very conscious of the economic importance of mechanization, is quite oblivious of its consequences for his comfortable doctrine that wages must rise steadily as long as the

economy can keep growing. Only someone who had learned to distinguish "labor" from "manufacture" as Steuart does would see the implications of mechanization clearly.)

45. Note that this is an assertion about the constitution, not about the cities. In the war, Sparta triumphed over an Athens that had become the capital of a commercial empire. But in constitutional history, Thebes liberated the Messenians when she triumphed over Sparta thirty years later. The Greece that went down before Philip and Alexander was Athenian in spirit (and in leadership so far as it had any leadership).
46. Lasson, *System der Sittlichkeit*, p. 489 (Harris and Knox, pp. 167–68). Hegel's language here is a sure sign that he is thinking in terms of the *Wealth of Nations*. For one can speak in this way only after the autonomy of economic life has been asserted. Throughout these pages, he is making Steuart's case *against* Smith, and his way of presenting Steuart's doctrine of state control over the economy makes sense only if we take it for granted that he has read Smith and knows what is fundamentally at issue between them.
47. *Principles*, pp. 403–4.
48. Lasson, *System of Ethical Life*, pp. 491–92 (Harris and Knox, pp. 170–71). Compare also Lasson, pp. 441–42 (Harris and Knox, pp. 125–26).
49. *Gesammelte Werke* VI, 324 (Harris and Knox, p. 249; my italics).
50. Compare *Gesammelte Werke* VIII, 243, 5–245, 5 with VI, 321, 1–326; the quotation is from VIII, 244, 21–22.
51. *Gesammelte Werke* VIII, 27–245, 1; and 245, 12–13. We should remember that Fichte's socialist economy was a model of the "machine-state" for Hegel. The success that modern governments have achieved in finding out what their citizens are doing every minute of the day would appall him—compare *Difference*, *Gesammelte Werke* IV, 23 (Harris and Cerf, pp. 146–47).
52. *Gesammelte Werke* VIII, 248, 8–16. This is the first point in the discussion of the judicial system that is new. Criminal justice has already been discussed in this manuscript itself; and the bad infinity of civil law is a point made in *Lasson*, p. 496 (Harris and Knox, p. 174).
53. *Gesammelte Werke* VIII, 248, 17–249, 7. (In this connection, the explicit presence of a revolutionary hope in the *Phenomenology* deserves to be remembered.)
54. *Gesammelte Werke* VIII, 252, 3–9.
55. Compare *Gesammelte Werke* VIII, 268, 15–269, 10 with *Faust*, Part I, 808–1010. (There is no question of a direct influence here, since the scene did not form part of *Faust*, *Ein Fragment*.)
56. *Gesammelte Werke* VIII, 269, 22–270, 13 (especially VIII, 270, 8–9).
57. Not that his social ideals changed at all when these events occurred—he was only made aware how unfathomable and dark the future is.
58. See *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), sec. 430.
59. *Difference between Fichte's and Schelling's Philosophy*, eds. H. S. Harris and W. Cerf (Albany: SUNY Press, 1977), p. 147—the quotation comes from Fichte himself and Hegel gives the reference, with a long footnote quoting the context.

## RELIGION AND CULTURE

Quentin Lauer, S.J.

There is in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* a peculiar enigma that, to my knowledge, has received relatively little attention from commentators and interpreters down through the years. As I see it, the concept of *Bildung*, which in this paper I shall translate as "culture"—despite the multiple shades of meaning the term expresses in different contexts—is an unquestionably key concept in coming to grips with the march of human spirit, from the absolutely minimal consciousness of a world of reality, presumed to be "out-there" and immediately available to sense awareness, to the ultimate in human self-knowing, which consciousness tortuously comes to recognize as the only absolutely authentic mode of contact with objective reality, since it is spirit and spirit alone that is the "locus" of reality's objectivity; spirit, so to speak, "makes" the world objective and in so doing makes the world its own. The enigma lies in the fact that the concept of "culture," the process whereby spirit becomes what it is to be through its own activity of self-integration, is treated explicitly in only one brief section in Chapter 6, "Spirit," the section entitled "Culture and Its Realm of Actuality" (25 pages).<sup>1</sup> What is more, the "culture" (or "cultivation") here treated, which looks exclusively to the coming-to-be of a "European" spirit, culminates in a burlesque, typified by the French culture of the ancien régime, where *esprit* has replaced spirit, and the only cultivation that counts is the cultivation of clever language, a burlesque that trails off in a series of references to Diderot's brilliant little satire, *Rameau's Nephew*.

Be the enigma what it may, it is not until the *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte* that Hegel speaks at great length of *Bildung* (in the sense of self-cultivation) as the mainspring of all spiritual development throughout the course of history. Here it is that the panoramic view of the *Bildung* of the human spirit that pervades the whole of the *Phenomenology*, even though it is made explicitly thematic only with regard to the cultivation of the European spirit, is seen to be characteristic of the human spirit throughout the millennia of its history.<sup>2</sup> It is precisely *Bildung*, as both the activity and the product of spirit, that reconciles the particular, without which spirit would not be concrete, having nothing to build upon, and the universal, without which spirit would not be authentic, having no depth of

its own (WG, 65–66).<sup>3</sup> Here is unfolded the process of successive integration, disintegration, and reintegration that characterizes the saga of human progress and that is recapitulated, so to speak, at higher and higher levels, as one “world-historical people” after another develops its own peculiar culture, each of which crumbles under the weight of its own logic—precisely because each is only partial—thus giving way to another culture, which in the same way blossoms and dies (see GPR, 343). What is peculiarly significant in all this—and here the theme is common to the *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History* and to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*—is that “culture” is inadequate to the task it has to perform until the human spirit is progressively “alienated” from the merely “natural” in which it is immersed, an alienation that does not take place independently of the religious consciousness from which emerges into reality a progressively more concrete human spirit, aware, precisely, of what it is to be spirit (see, WG, 125, 128, 131–32). In Hegel’s view, then, religion and culture can never be separated in the process of man’s becoming human, which, to employ an expression that is not Hegel’s, can be called *die Menschwerdung des Menschen*. The “modern” age, it is true, beginning with the Enlightenment, has made valiant efforts to effect this separation, but it is precisely in this, as Hegel sees it, that it has failed. It too cannot escape the dialectic of integration, disintegration, and reintegration, and its *Bildung*, like that of the ages that preceded it, will be self-defeating if the only possible integrator of spirit, Absolute Spirit, initially, at least, revealed in religious consciousness in its orientation of the authenticity of the human, is left out of the picture. Characteristic of the truly human are art, science, morality, law, religion, and philosophy. If any of these is missing, man is less than truly human (see WG, 43, 124, 126, 127).

What, then, is “culture,” as Hegel understands it? It might be well to note at the beginning of our investigation that, although the term *Kultur* is common enough in German, it is a term that Hegel employs very rarely, and never as signifying culture in the profoundest sense of interior self-cultivation, self-realization. *Kultur* refers exclusively to the external products of an interiorly developed human spirit, and its meaning can range from cultivation of the soil (agriculture) to the sublimest creations of fine art—the temple of Apollo, the palace of the king, the sculpture of Phidias, or the *Antigone* of Sophocles. It might also be well to note that “culture” in the proper sense, although it can and must be said of individuals—who are *gebildet* or *ausgebildet*—refers primarily to the spirit of a people, all of whose members share, albeit in varying degrees, in a *Bildung* that is common to all. One can speak legitimately of the culture of China, of India, of Persia, of Egypt, of Greece, or of Rome. It is in this sense that Hegel sees the culture of a people as inextricably bound up with that people’s religion. One can

also, however, in a rather more limited sense, speak of English, French, Italian, or German culture, where the link with any one identifiable religion (or even "church") is not at all obvious—although Hegel does contend that the Christian religion not only characterizes but also molds the culture of Western (European) man in a unique way (see WG, 131), even though, as he makes abundantly clear in his critique of the "theologians" of his own day (e.g., in PdG, GPR, EpW, and VPR) that philosophy must take up the task that "theology" has abdicated, precisely because philosophy, as Hegel sees it, takes the concrete reality of God more seriously than do either a "pietistic" religion or an "erudite" theology.

The use of the term *Bildung*, however, is not confined to an expression of this rather obvious meaning—obvious to the extent that only if the term can have this meaning does it make sense at all to speak of a "Philosophy of World History." Hegel has often been accused, most recently by Mr. Bronowski, of having denied—or, at the very least, ignored—the concept of evolution. But this is not quite accurate. Hegel, it is true, does not deal with the theory of evolution—one wonders how he could have in 1825—but it is not difficult to understand why he would not: His concern is not to trace a "natural" process, whose determining factors are not under the control of man, but rather to interpret a process of humanizing the human through that activity which characterizes the human, spiritual activity (see WG, 61–62, 72–73, 530, 554, 576)—man can become human only by making himself human. If, we might say, natural evolution must precede spiritual development, so be it! It is still true, as Hegel sees it, that only spirit has a history—evolution is not history. In Hegel's view, man is most authentically human when man is spirit, and this does not happen all at once—spirit is that unique process that is its own result.

It may very well be that what Hegel has to say about "the spirit of a people—or the spirit of a period in human history—leave much to be desired in terms of preciseness. It is nevertheless true that, if we are to come to grips with the concept of "culture"—in a sense more profound than that of mere *Kultur*—we cannot dispense with a concept of "spirit," which, although it cannot be confined to designating the individual spirit of each individual man, nevertheless does admit of a usage in the plural, the *Geister* of the final chapter in the *Phenomenology*, whose dialectical process of development culminates in the unique integrated and integrating "Absolute Spirit," without which Hegel's philosophy would not be a philosophy at all. Without the concept of *Geister*, in the plural, there would be no concept of "culture" (*Bildungen*), in the plural (see WG, 785, 805), which, despite their multiplicity, constitute one continuous dialectical process of *Bildung* that culminates also in the uniquely unifying "Absolute Spirit." It is for this reason that, for Hegel, religious consciousness (religion) is indispensable for



the process that is spirit and for *Bildung*, which is the self-developing mode of that process (see WG, 172). The *Bildungen* that characterize "world-historical" peoples do not merely follow each other in time, nor do the diverse *Bildungen* that characterize different simultaneously existing peoples (the British, the French, the Italian, the German) merely complement each other in space. They constitute the ongoing dialectical process of integration, disintegration, and reintegration that is the human history of spiritual growth. To each culture there corresponds an image of man, and that image of man is intimately linked to the manner in which men represent (*vorstellen*) to themselves the overarching Spirit that unites them, from the spirit completely immersed in nature, through the multiple spirits that express the particularities of the human condition, to the unique Absolute Spirit that transcends both the natural and the particular—without at the same time eliminating either the natural or the particular (see PdG, VIII).

That the picture of human spiritual development that Hegel paints constitutes, in broad lines at least, an accurate description of a process that has taken place need not be too difficult to accept. That the process links culture and religion in such a way that neither is intelligible without the other may be more difficult to accept. That the whole process is "logical," determined by its own inner "dialectic," may be completely unacceptable. The main point that Hegel is making, however, is a valid one: Man is that unique being who belongs at once to the world of nature and to the world of spirit; but, unlike all other beings of nature, what man is to become is not inscribed in nature, neither in nature in general nor in his own particular nature. Man is to become what he is to become as a result of his own activity (WG, 58); man's true humanity is to be the product of his own activity (WG, 62), such that man ever remains what he is as human and at the same time constantly becomes more authentically what he is (WG, 35). It may, of course, be difficult to conceive, especially in the light of recent history (to which we shall return later), that humanity is constantly rising to higher levels of culture; has it ever in its history risen to a higher level than it did in the Golden Age of Athenian culture? But that is precisely where the important distinction between *Bildung* and *Kultur* comes in: The Greek *Kultur* of the Golden Age reached such an extraordinarily high level because, better perhaps than any other culture in history, it expressed externally the fullness of its own interior *Bildung*, but the *Bildung* it expressed, because merely particular, still had a long way to go in coming to the realization of the spiritual goal of being most fully human, self-determining, self-contained, self-integrated. The disintegration of Greek culture and the reintegration at what has to be called the lower level of Roman culture need be no argument against this. From the bosom of a culture more ancient than that of the Greeks had already emerged a religious principle, the transcen-



dent, unique, spiritual God of the Jews, who was to eclipse the cultures of both the Greeks and the Romans. Admittedly Hegel has a hard time (as has everyone else) coming to grips with the emergence of this principle of human self-consciousness, but he sees in it the preparation for a more adequate *Bildung* of human self-consciousness in the awareness of an Absolute who is not abstractly one, but concretely three-in-one (see WG, 722), and thus the more adequate paradigm of human unity in multiplicity, of a universality that conquers the limitations of particularity (see WG, 111, 510, 527, 721).

Here, however, we are face-to-face with a Hegelian concept we have not yet called upon, but with which those who know the seventh chapter of Hegel's *Phenomenology* will already be familiar. Not only is the dialectic of spirit's culture one of self-activity, whereby man rises to an ever-higher awareness of what it is to be human (WG, 35); not only is the goal to which man is oriented not one that is antecedently inscribed in a blueprint of nature, because the human spirit is to bring into being freely that to which it is oriented; but the process toward the goal is at once the activity of the human *and* of the divine spirit. "It is essential to this process that there be levels [of development], and world-history is the manifestation of the divine process, the ascension by stages, wherein spirit both knows and actualizes itself and its truth" (WG, 74).

Strong medicine this, it is true; but the question is not at the moment whether the medicine is too strong to take; the question is not even whether what Hegel says is true; it is simply a question of whether Hegel means what he says. We can, if we wish, say that, when Hegel speaks of man as "in himself his own goal" (WG, 106), goal nevertheless is not predetermined, as it would be if man were simply a being of nature; that man is thus his own goal "only through the divine that dwells in him" (*ibid.*); that he is not speaking religious language; that he is using the term "divine" merely metaphorically; but it would seem that the evidence for this contention has yet to be uncovered. When Hegel further says that "the goal of the spirit" is "to give itself consciousness of the Absolute," and that "this consciousness of his is alone true," or that this is at once "honor paid to God" and the "glorification of the truth" (*ibid.*), it is indeed difficult to see why we should not take him at his word. Nor does this take away from—rather it enhances—the dignity of man, since "in honoring God the individual spirit too finds its own dignity," in the recognition that man's "activity for the honor of God is the absolute [for man]" (*ibid.*). Precisely here is where philosophy comes in, for it is "philosophy" that "*thinks and comprehends* what is contained in religion in the mode of representation, both sensible and spiritual"<sup>4</sup> (WG, 134; see also 172). The point Hegel is trying to make, however, is that the activity of honoring God concerns man more than it

does God, since "the dignity of man is to be found in honoring the divine . . . such that the divine receives honor through the honor given to the human, and the human receives honor through the honor paid to the divine" (WG, 572; see 181, 573).

This last statement, it is true, is made in the context of Hegel's discussion of Greek religion, wherein the beauty of Greek art honors both the divine that it portrays and the human that does the portraying, but it has to be read in continuity with a whole series of texts wherein ever higher forms of religious representation give rise to an ever more purified conceptualization of what it is to be human, to be spirit, since "God is the essence of the human" (WG, 575). Nor is this to be separated from man's progressive realization of his own rationality; reason, after all, "is the substance of spirit" (WG, 733). But the rationality of spirit is not to be divorced from the rationality of spirit's object; that object is rational, whether it be present in the explicitly rational form of philosophical thinking or in the implicitly rational form of religious consciousness (*ibid.*), and the move to explicit rationality is accomplished in the progressive overcoming of the naturalness in which the human spirit, even religious spirit, is immersed (*ibid.*). Objective rationality, whether as the goal of religious or philosophical consciousness, is not the product of the human rational process seen as merely subjective activity, as would be, for example, rational conceptualization for Kant.

It may seem that Hegel is taking a very large leap when he moves quite rapidly from this vague religious consciousness of the unity of the divine and the human to the Christian dogma of the unity of the divine and the human in the Incarnation (WG, 729). In a sense, of course, it is a leap, but Hegel is convinced not only that the move must be made but also that the move is philosophically defensible. That there are dogmas at all, he claims, is true only because there is philosophical explication of religious belief—nor is the philosophical explication alien to the content of religious belief (WG, 742). More than that, although the human and the divine are not simply to be identified (WG, 734)—a contradiction that "understanding" sees so readily—a union with the divine is essential to the actualization of spirituality in the human, and this "speculative" thinking can comprehend; it can find that the "essence" of the human is in an intelligible sense "divine."

Man becomes actual as a spiritual being only when he overcomes his naturalness. This overcoming becomes possible only under the supposition that the human and the divine natures are substantially and consciously (*an und für sich*) one, and that man, to the extent that he is spirit, possesses the essentiality and substantiality which pertains to the concept of God. (WG, 821)

This human consciousness of union with the divine is neither immediately given nor readily comprehensible; man must grow into it. "The consciousness of this union with the divine is given in Christ. What is important, then, is that man come to grips with this consciousness and that it be constantly awakened in him" (ibid.). The "de-naturalization" of the human takes both time and effort, and the model of it is to be found in the God-man.

Now, what is important in all this is Hegel's claim that the whole of post-Roman "European" cultural development has been tied in with and conditioned by Christian religious consciousness and by the latter's explicitation in a philosophical awareness of just what it is to be human, to be spiritual, to be spirit in a way that images in a this-worldly context the spiritual reality of God. The crux of Hegel's claims is his contention that man, as the unique combination of the "natural" and the "spiritual," must by his own activity "overcome" the merely natural in himself and thus actualize the truly spiritual, which is his destiny and his dignity, by being reconciled with God as "Spirit," the paradigm of all spirit (WG, 878). The process of this overcoming is the *Bildung* that characterizes Western man, a *Bildung* marked by centuries of vicissitudes whose overtones are moral, religious, legal, and political, but whose orientation is ineluctably the realization of man's true being as spirit, since only spirit is self-determining, free—and this is *human* destiny. Most of us, I venture to say, can see at least the plausibility of the way in which Hegel links religious and cultural developments in the civilizations of China, India, Persia, and Egypt—however fanciful may be the historical account he gives of this linkage. Nor need we be too skeptical about his account of the rise and fall *pari passu* of Greek religion and Greek culture, Roman religion and Roman culture. By the same token, no one, I am sure, will be inclined to deny the enormous influence of the Judaeo-Christian religious tradition on the cultural development of the West. Hegel has, however, left us with two problems that I do not pretend that a paper as limited in scope as this one is can solve: (1) how Christian, in fact, is (or was, in Hegel's day) the culture of the West, and (2) how philosophically necessary is it still to link religious consciousness and cultural development?

For brevity's sake I shall approach the answers to these questions through a detailed analysis of a very short section in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History* (6 pages), entitled "The Spiritual Cultivation (*Bildung*) of Europe." If we are to follow even this brief account, however, we must recall that Hegel brings to it two presuppositions: (1) that it is not until the end of the Middle Ages, with the Reformation, which, in a certain sense, marks the religious breakup of Europe, that we can begin to speak of Europe as a cultural unity; and (2) scientific "understanding" (*Verstand*),

emerging from the Renaissance, stands on the side of both religious and cultural disintegration, whereas "rational" comprehension (*Vernunft*) stands on the side of religious and cultural reintegration.

The period of which Hegel here speaks, the period following the Reformation, is one in which *Verstand* was formally cultivated. Religion had, so to speak, run its course and had been crystallized in the Lutheran faith. Thus its role had ceased to be that of a cultural force, in the sense that religious development determines cultural development. The role of cultural force was now taken over by scientific understanding. This is not to say that there was to be no internal development within both the Lutheran and the Catholic churches, but that what came into prominence in the overall development was the culture of learned individuals (*Privatbildung*), and this in such a way that the individual subject, recognized as counting precisely as individual, attained to the "form of universality," in the sense that the whole of a culture was expressed in the activity of individuals, and that the culture took on a value of its own independently of religion. The result was a new attitude toward nature: The human spirit could now trust nature; it was no threat to man but rather was that wherein man could seek both the truth of nature itself and his own truth. Nature had ceased to be no more than a manifestation of the divine but contained in itself its own worth. All of this comes under the heading of "secularization," which was to become the characteristic of modern European culture, a sort of secular "righteousness" to be attained in cultivating natural science, without, however, abrogating its religious dimensions, since faith, precisely as separated from science, continued to see in God the ultimate paradigm of all that was good and "righteous" (WG, 910).

The important step that had been taken was that man could turn his attention to the particulars of nature, without seeking the Church's permission to justify this move. The matters of war, industry, business, commerce, and family life came under the aegis of rationality and were no longer under the control of the Church. Rational inquiry, then, was self-contained, based only on experience and reflection, without religious overtones. At this point we begin to find echoes of Hegel's treatment of "culture" in the *Phenomenology*: At the head of cultural development stood France, where the cultivation of scientific knowledge became a concern of the whole nation. The cultivation of the sciences, however, was not to be separated from the cultivation of nobility of character. Still, precisely because cultivation was preeminently that of the natural sciences, and nobility of character was more the topic of cultivated rhetoric than it was the outcome of genuinely ethical responsibility, the "virtues" of French *noblesse* lacked a firm moral foundation (WG, 911).

In the movement that Hegel is describing, precisely because the human

spirit had lost its fear of being able to reconcile itself with nature, the empirical sciences bloomed. In terms of "culture," however, empirical science meant more than the turn of experience; it meant also that man in his capacity as thinking spirit discovered the "laws" that govern nature and found them in nature itself. God was not out of the picture yet, but the emphasis had shifted; it was "science" that gave honor to both God and man. It was as though God were revealing himself all over again, as though God had re-created a universe, the secrets of which the mind found more and more comprehensible through the workings of *Verstand*. Paradoxically enough, however, the rationality of the world, which scientific thinking was progressively unfolding, was accompanied by the emergence of all sorts of superstition, magic, and witchcraft, the price being paid for the downgrading of religion (WG, 912).<sup>5</sup>

What Hegel now saw was, on the one hand, a complete secularization of culture, the supernatural reduced to the natural, total disbelief in the miraculous, since nature was taken to be a complete rational system that man could know. On the other hand, what was emerging was a complete divorce of culture and religion, one result of which was that the Catholic church looked upon the triumph of science as an insult to God (once again the case of Galileo raises its ugly head) and sought to combat this with an irrational appeal to the Bible. Apart from the political motives (and pressures) that could have induced Hegel to interpret the Catholic church's stance in this way, he did see a certain justification in the attitude of the "Christian" church in relation to the proliferation of "scientific" theories in this period. The temptation is, after all, to look upon the "laws" of nature as ultimate (as though "nature" somehow does its own legislating), and this carries with it a tendency toward materialism and atheism. If "laws" of nature are inscribed in nature by nature itself, there is discoverable in these laws no bridge to God. But, says Hegel, this can happen only when there is too much reliance on the disintegrating force of *Verstand* alone (WG, 913). What is more, since a whole culture had been infected with the virus of scientific understanding, even on the religious side, the effort to combat this "naturalism" relied far too much on abstract analysis.

There can be no question that the modern spirit of philosophical inquiry, the beginning of which Hegel finds in Descartes, had effected a separation of the human thinking subject from that which had previously been conceived of as ruling that spirit from above. To find itself, the human spirit now looked to itself alone, and this was the prelude to a thinking that was conceived of as self-determining in itself (WG, 914). No longer, to the scientific mind, was there question of the grace of God coming from without to enlighten that mind. It was Descartes who had turned the mind's gaze inward, and his *cogito, ergo sum* is to be interpreted not as an

inference from thought to being, but as a recognition that being and thought (human thought) are one. That this insight should be elucidated in the conviction that the external world must exhibit the same rationality that human thought does, may itself not be a thoroughly rational conviction. That the universe exhibit this kind of rationality is not, properly speaking, a rational demand—the universe is deaf to such demands—it is a kind of “religious” conviction. One is reminded of A. N. Whitehead’s contention that the scientist must begin his inquiry with an “act of faith in the decency of the universe.” The pattern now is one of observing nature, discovering that it is regulated by “laws” that constitute its rationality, that imperceptibly become prescriptive rather than descriptive. Enter the Enlightenment, and the disintegration is complete (WG, 915). Kant, Fichte, Jacobi, and Schleiermacher accept the disintegration as complete, even though they continue to insist that the validity of faith is not compromised thereby.

For a reason that is not too obvious, Hegel does not, in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*, complete the dialectical circle by moving from disintegration to reintegration, unless, of course, he is simply saying that the future is not a historical question at all. He does, however, throw out some helpful hints in this regard in the very last section of the *Lectures*, entitled “The Present Situation.” There he suggests that the disintegration had come about because of Spirit’s failure to recognize itself for what it is, a recognition that will come about only if it listens to the testimony of Absolute Spirit, which bears witness to the true reality of human spirit, and this, if we are willing to inquire carefully, Spirit does in “world-history,” the history that on the very last page, Hegel calls “the true theodicy,” the “justification of God.”

The spirit is only what it makes of itself; and for that it is necessary that it presuppose itself. Only this insight can reconcile the spirit with world-history and with actuality, the realization that what has happened and what happens at all times not only comes from God and is not without God, but is essentially the work of God himself. (WG, 938; see also 78, 81)

But the answer is not contained here. What Hegel does is to send us back to the final chapter of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, where religious consciousness and rational self-consciousness are reconciled in “Absolute Knowing,” the elaboration of which constitutes the whole of the *Science of Logic* and the “system” that flows from it. The answer, then, depends on the ability of the human spirit to go beyond the “analytic” thinking of *Verstand* to the “speculative” thinking of *Vernunft*; only in the latter can the spiritual destiny of man (cultural and religious) be realized.

## NOTES

1. It is true, of course, that the overall title of section B, in chapter 6, is "The Self-Alienated Spirit: Culture" (75 pages), but *Bildung* as such is treated only in the briefer subsection.
2. It could, of course, seem arbitrary that the present brief study confines itself almost exclusively to the text of the *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte*. The reasons for this restriction, however, are fairly obvious: (1) The full text of these *Lectures*, delivered between 1825 and 1830 in Berlin, has only recently become available, and it gives abundant evidence of emphasis in Hegel's mature thought on the significance of self-cultivation for the development of the human. (2) The *Lectures* develop very cogently the overriding theme in Hegel's thought of the link between human self-development and the "Christian principle," as he calls it, of the self-consciousness that has the realization of freedom as its orientation. (3) Nowhere else is the close connection of religion, culture, and philosophy more prominent.
3. The following abbreviations are used throughout the text:  
 EpW: *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften*, Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp (with Zusätze), 1970.  
 GPR: *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*, ed. Johannes Hoffmeister. Hamburg: Meiner, 1955.  
 PdG: *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, ed. Johannes Hoffmeister. Hamburg: Meiner, 1952.  
 VPR: *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1969.  
 WG: *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte*, eds. George Lasson and Johannes Hoffmeister. Hamburg: Meiner, 1968.
4. It might be well to point out that the term *Vorstellung*, which I here translate as "representation," is participial in form and thus connotes process—toward thought and comprehension.
5. A phenomenon, incidentally, that has been recognized in both the Soviet Union and in the Republic of China.





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